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POEMS

BY

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

52527

WITH A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

BY HIS BROTHER.

IX. L. 24

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.
1851.

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CONTENTS.

Page

MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS 3

SONNETS OF THE SEASONS 59

SONNETS AND OTHER POEMS ON BIRDS, INSECTS, AND FLOWERS—

HUMMING BIRDS 81

THE CRICKET 82

LINES WRITTEN OPPOSITE A DRAWING OF A PARROT AND BUTTERFLY 84

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT 85

THE NIGHTINGALE 88

THE CUCKOO 89

THE ANEMONE. 90

EUPHRASIA OFFICINALIS, OR EYE-BRIGHT . . . 92

THE COWSLIP 93

THE COWSLIP AND THE LARK 95

ON A BUNCH OF COWSLIPS 96

THE CELANDINE AND THE DAISY 99

Page

SONNETS AND OTHER POEMS—*continued.*

THE SNOWDROP 100

THE GENTIANELLA 101

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY 103

THE DANDELION 104

TO THE PLANT "EVERLASTING." 105

THE FORGET-ME-NOT 110

SONNETS AND OTHER POEMS REFERRING TO THE PERIOD OF INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD—

CHILDHOOD 115

TO AN INFANT 116

TO AN INFANT 117

TO AN INFANT. WRITTEN ON A SNOWY DAY . . 118

TO A DEAF AND DUMB LITTLE GIRL . . . 119

THE GOD-CHILD 120

TWINS 121

BOYHOOD AND GIRLHOOD 122

TO K. H. I. 123

THOU, BABY INNOCENCE 125

FAIN WOULD I DIVE 127

ON AN INFANT'S HAND 128

TO JEANNETTE, SIX WEEKS OLD 131

TO THE SAME, ON HER FIRST BIRTHDAY . . . 134

TO MARGARET, ON HER FIRST BIRTHDAY . . 136

THE FOURTH BIRTHDAY 137

THE INFANT'S SOUL 139

Page

SONNETS AND OTHER POEMS—*continued.*

TO DEAR LITTLE KATY HILL 141

TO CHRISTABEL ROSE COLERIDGE 144

PRIMITIÆ 146

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY 147

LINES, WRITTEN IN A BIBLE PRESENTED BY THE AUTHOR TO HIS GODCHILD 148

MEDITATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE PIECES.—MEMORIAL POEMS—

WHY IS THERE WAR ON EARTH? 151

LINES WRITTEN IN THE FLY-LEAF OF A COPY OF LUCRETIUS 154

LINES ON A CAST OF THE INFANT HERCULES . . 156

SUMMER RAIN 159

TO W. W. 160

WRITTEN AT BELLE-VUE, AMBLESIDE 161

NAWORTH 163

LINES 165

HIDDEN MUSIC 167

I HAVE WRITTEN MY NAME ON WATER . . . 168

ON A PICTURE OF A VERY YOUNG NUN . . . 169

BEAUTY 171

FAIRY LAND 173

THE ROYAL MAID 175

ON THE DEATH OF HENRY NELSON COLERIDGE . 177

AGNES 180

FAREWELL! 183

Page

MEDITATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE PIECES—*continued.*

TO A FRIEND 185

A SCHOOLFELLOW'S TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THE REV. OWEN LLOYD 187

TO THE MEMORY OF JAMES GREENWOOD . . . 190

TO A LADY 194

ON THE DEATH OF THOMAS JACKSON . . . 196

ON THE LATE DR. ARNOLD 200

EPITAPH ON OWEN LLOYD 204

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS, CHIEFLY LYRICAL. PLAYFUL AND HUMOROUS PIECES—

THE BLIND MAN'S ADDRESS TO HIS LOVE . . 207

SONG. TO A WELSH AIR, "AR HYD Y NOS" . . 209

ON SEEING THREE YOUNG LADIES ON GRASMERE LAKE 211

MARRIED LIFE 213

A POOR MAN'S REASONS FOR NOT MARRYING . . 215

LINES WRITTEN IMPROMPTU AFTER HEARING A LADY SINGING 216

GOOD NIGHT 217

VALENTINE, BY AN AGED LOVER 219

LINES 220

AS THE DEW OF THE MORNING 221

NEVER TILL NOW I FELT 221

TO A FRIEND LEAVING GRASMERE 222

SONG 223

SONG 224

THE SOLACE OF SONG 226

Page

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS—*continued.*

A SONG WITHOUT A TUNE 228

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN 231

A WANTON BARD 233

THE GUERNSEY LILY 235

TO A YOUNG LADY FROM A FOREIGN CLIME . . 236

AN AUTOGRAPH 239

SONG 240

THE OLD ARM CHAIR 241

TO THE MAGPIE 246

TO A RED HERRING 250

TO A CAT 252

ANGELS HAVE WINGS 253

DE ANIMABUS BRUTORUM 254

TO GOODY TWOSHOES 260

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY 263

THE LARCH GROVE 265

DENT 266

GEOLOGY 267

TRANSLATIONS—

FROM THE GERMAN 269

FROM CATULLUS 270

FROM CATULLUS 271

SCHILLER'S TRANSLATION OF MACBETH . . . 273

STATIUS, LIB. I. 493. 276

PÆAN OF ARIPHOON THE SICYONIAN 278

Page

PROMETHEUS. A FRAGMENT 279

SKETCHES OF ENGLISH POETS—

CHAUCER 315

SPENSER 317

SHAKESPEARE 319

DRAYTON 320

DONNE 321

DANIEL 322

DRYDEN 323

DRYDEN'S SUCCESSORS 325

PARNELL 326

SWIFT 327

YOUNG AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES 327

WILKIE, DODSLEY, &c. 333

SCRIPTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS—

THE BIBLE 339

THE LITURGY 340

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH 341

BELIEVE AND PRAY 342

SETH 343

ENOCH 344

ABRAHAM 345

HAGAR 346

ISAAC AND REBEKAH 347

LEAH 348

MOSES IN THE BULRUSHES 349

Page

SCRIPTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS—*continued.*

ON A PICTURE OF JEPHTHAH AND HIS DAUGHTER . 350

IN CONTINUATION 351

RUTH 352

RIZPAH 353

SOLOMON 354

ELIJAH 355

THE JEWISH CAPTIVES 356

EZRA III. 11—13 357

CHRISTMAS 358

SIMEON 363

JESUS PRAYING 364

BUT JESUS SLEPT 365

SUNDAY 366

THE SOUL 368

BE NOT AFRAID TO PRAY 369

CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES 370

FAITH—HOW GUARDED 371

STAY WHERE THOU ART 372

PSALM XCI. 1 373

ISAIAH XLVI. 9 374

CHURCH VIEWS 375

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES 376

WYTHEBURN CHAPEL AND HOSTEL 378

ON THE CONSECRATION OF A SMALL CHAPEL . . 380

Page

SCRIPTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS—*continued.*

THE SAME CONTINUED 381

THE DESERTED CHURCH 382

THE WORD OF GOD 384

A GRACE 385

"MULTUM DILEXIT" 387

POSTHUMOUS POEMS.

1850.

ἑκὼν ἐγὼ
μαθοῦσιν αὐδῶ, κοὐ μαθοῦσιν λήθομαι.

Αἰσχ 'Αγαμ.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A SMALL proportion of the Poems in this volume was prepared for the press by the Author. Of the remainder, it is probable that several have not received his last corrections; and that some were not intended for publication. But in making the selection from a much larger number, the Editor has had no guide but his own discretion. He has generally, but not uniformly, chosen such as appeared to him most finished. In some cases, he has seen in a hasty sketch sufficient interest to atone, in his opinion, for one or more weak or imperfect lines. A word here and there may have been mistaken from the imperfection of the manuscript; and better copies of some of the pieces, now first printed, may be in existence. These, and other inaccuracies, should such be detected, will, it is hoped, be pardoned in a posthumous publication.

The fine sonnets on "Homer," and on "Freedom," are variations, and, as the Editor thinks, improvements upon those bearing the same name in the first volume, with which it may be interesting to compare them.

ST. MARK'S COLLEGE, CHELSEA,
December 22nd, 1850.

SONNETS.

I.

TO S. T. COLERIDGE.

If when thou wert a living man, my sire,
I shrank unequal from the task to praise
The ripening worth of thy successive days,
What shall I do since that imputed fire,
Extinct its earthly aliment, doth aspire,
Purged from the passionate subject of all lays,
From all that fancy fashions and obeys,
Beyond the argument of mortal lyre?
If while a militant and suffering saint,
Thou walk'dst the earth in penury and pain,
Thy great Idea was too high a strain
For my infirmity, how shall I dare
Thy perfect and immortal self to paint?
Less awful task to "draw empyreal air."

II.

Oh! my dear mother, art thou still awake?
Or art thou sleeping on thy Maker's arm,—
Waiting in slumber for the shrill alarm
Ordain'd to give the world its final shake?
Art thou with "interlunar night" opaque
Clad like a worm while waiting for its wings;
Or doth the shadow of departed things
Dwell on thy soul as on a breezeless lake!
Oh! would that I could see thee in thy heaven
For one brief hour, and know I was forgiven
For all the pain and doubt and rankling shame
Which I have caused to make thee weep or sigh.
Bootless the wish! for where thou art on high,
Sin casts no shadow, sorrow hath no name.

1845.

III.

Hast thou not seen an aged rifted tower,
Meet habitation for the Ghost of Time,
Where fearful ravage makes decay sublime,
And destitution wears the face of power?
Yet is the fabric deck'd with many a flower
Of fragrance wild, and many-dappled hue,
Gold streak'd with iron-brown and nodding blue,
Making each ruinous chink a fairy bower.
E'en such a thing methinks I fain would be,
Should Heaven appoint me to a lengthen'd age;
So old in look, that Young and Old may see
The record of my closing pilgrimage:
Yet, to the last, a rugged wrinkled thing
To which young sweetness may delight to cling!

IV.

LET me not deem that I was made in vain,
Or that my Being was an accident,
Which Fate, in working its sublime intent,
Not wish'd to be, to hinder would not deign.
Each drop uncounted in a storm of rain
Hath its own mission, and is duly sent
To its own leaf or blade, not idly spent
'Mid myriad dimples on the shipless main.
The very shadow of an insect's wing,
For which the violet cared not while it stay'd,
Yet felt the lighter for its vanishing,
Proved that the sun was shining by its shade:
Then can a drop of the eternal spring,
Shadow of living lights, in vain be made?

V.

PAINS I have known, that cannot be again,
And pleasures too that never can be more:
For loss of pleasure I was never sore,
But worse, far worse it is, to feel no pain.
The throes and agonies of a heart explain
Its very depth of want at inmost core;
Prove that it does believe, and would adore,
And doth with ill for ever strive and strain.
I not lament for happy childish years,
For loves departed, that have had their day,
Or hopes that faded when my head was grey;
For death hath left me last of my compeers:
But for the pain I felt, the gushing tears
I used to shed when I had gone astray.

VI.

WHY should I murmur at my lot forlorn?
The self-same Fate that doom'd me to be poor
Endues me with a spirit to endure
All, and much more than is, or has been borne
By better men, of want and worldly scorn.
My soul has faith—my body has the nerve
To brave the penance that my sins deserve:
And yet my helpless state I deeply mourn.
Well could I bear to be deserted quite;
Less should I blame my fortune were it worse:
But taking all, it yet hath left me friends,
For whom I needs must mourn the wayward spite
That hides my purpose in an empty purse;
Since what I grateful wish, in wishing ends.

VII.

WHEN I review the course that I have run,
And count the loss of all my wasted days,
I find no argument for joy or praise
In whatsoe'er my soul hath thought or done.
I am a desert, and the kindly sun
On me hath vainly spent his fertile rays.
Then wherefore do I tune my idle lays,
Or dream that haply I may be the one
Of the vain thousands, that shall win a place
Among the Poets,—that a single rhyme
Of my poor wit's devising may find grace
To breed high memories in the womb of time?
But to confound the time the Muse I woo;
Then 'tis but just that time confound me too.

VIII.

A LONELY wanderer upon earth am I,
The waif of nature—like uprooted weed
Borne by the stream, or like a shaken reed,
A frail dependent of the fickle sky.
Far, far away, are all my natural kin:
The mother that erewhile hath hush'd my cry,
Almost hath grown a mere fond memory.
Where is my sister's smile? my brother's boisterous din?
Ah! nowhere now. A matron grave and sage,
A holy mother is that sister sweet.
And that bold brother is a pastor meet
To guide, instruct, reprove a sinful age,
Almost I fear, and yet I fain would greet;
So far astray hath been my pilgrimage.

IX.

How many meanings may a single sigh
Heave from the bosom; early, yet too late,
I learn'd with sighs to audit mine estate,
While yet I deem'd my hope was only shy
And wishing to be woo'd. Fain to descry
The little cloud I thought could never vex
My vernal season, I would still perplex
With sighs the counsel of my destiny.
Still it moved on, and ever larger grew,
And still I sigh'd and sigh'd—and then I panted;
For now the cloud is huge, and close to view.
It burst; the thunder roar'd, the sharp rain slanted,
The tempest pass'd, and I was almost fain
To sigh forlorn, and hear the sigh again.

X.

How shall a man fore-doom'd to lone estate,
Untimely old, irreverently grey,
Much like a patch of dusky snow in May,
Dead sleeping in a hollow, all too late—
How shall so poor a thing congratulate
The blest completion of a patient wooing,
Or how commend a younger man for doing
What ne'er to do hath been his fault or fate?
There is a fable, that I once did read,
Of a bad angel, that was someway good,
And therefore on the brink of Heaven he stood,
Looking each way, and no way could proceed;
Till at the last he purged away his sin
By loving all the joy he saw within.

XI.

It were a state too terrible for man,
Too terrible and strange, and most unmeet,
To look into himself, his state to scan,
And find no precedent, no chart, or plan,
But think himself an embryo incomplete,
Or else a remnant of a world effete,
Some by-blow of the universal Pan,
Great nature's waif, that must by law escheat
To the liege-lord Corruption. Sad the case
Of man, who knows not wherefore he was made;
But he that knows the limits of his race
Not runs, but flies, with prosperous winds to aid;
Or if he limps, he knows his path was trod
By saints of old, who knew their way to God.

XII.

THINK upon Death, 'tis good to think of Death,
But better far to think upon the Dead.
Death is a spectre with a bony head,
Or the mere mortal body without breath,
The state foredoom'd of every son of Seth,
Decomposition—dust, or dreamless sleep.
But the dear Dead are they for whom we weep,
For whom I credit all the Bible saith.
Dead is my father, dead is my good mother,
And what on earth have I to do but die?
But if by grace I reach the blessed sky,
I fain would see the same, and not another;
The very father that I used to see,
The mother that has nursed me on her knee.

XIII.

WHAT is the meaning of the word "sublime,"
Utter'd full oft, and never yet explain'd?
It is a truth that cannot be contain'd
In formal bounds of thought, in prose, or rhyme.
'Tis the Eternal struggling out of Time.
It is in man a birth-mark of his kind
That proves him kindred with immaculate mind,
The son of him that in the stainless prime
Was God's own image. Whatsoe'er creates
At once abasement, and a sense of glory,
Whate'er of sight, sound, feeling, fact, or story,
Exalts the man, and yet the self rebates,
That is the true sublime, which can confess
In weakness strength, the great in littleness.

XIV.

HOMER.

FAR from the sight of earth, yet bright and plain
As the clear noon-day sun, an "orb of song"
Lovely and bright is seen, amid the throng
Of lesser stars, that rise, and wax, and wane,
The transient rulers of the fickle main,
One constant light gleams through the dark and long
And narrow aisle of memory. How strong,
How fortified with all the numerous train
Of truths wert thou, Great Poet of mankind,
Who told'st in verse as mighty as the sea,
And various as the voices of the wind,
The strength of passion rising in the glee
Of battle. Fear was glorified by thee,
And Death is lovely in thy tale enshrined.

XV.

'TWERE surely hard to toil without an aim.
Then shall the toil of an immortal mind
Spending its strength for good of human kind
Have no reward on earth but empty fame?
Oh, say not so. 'Tis not the echoed name,
Dear though it be—dear to the wafting wind,
That is not all the poet leaves behind,
That once has kindled an undying flame.
And what is that? It is a happy feeling
Begot by bird, or flower, or vernal bee.
'Tis aught that acts, unconsciously revealing
To mortal man his immortality.
Then think, O Poet, think how bland, how healing,
The beauty thou hast taught thy fellow men to see.

XVI.

TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

YES, mighty Poet, we have read thy lines,
And felt our hearts the better for the reading.
A friendly spirit, from thy soul proceeding,
Unites our souls; the light from thee that shines
Like the first break of morn, dissolves, combines
All creatures with a living flood of beauty.
For thou hast proved that purest joy is duty,
And love a fondling, that the trunk entwines
Of sternest fortitude. Oh, what must be
Thy glory here, and what the huge reward
In that blest region of thy poesy?
For long as man exists, immortal Bard,
Friends, husbands, wives, in sadness or in glee,
Shall love each other more for loving thee.

XVII.

TO THE SAME.

And those whose lot may never be to meet
Kin souls confined in bodies sever'd far,
As if thy Genius were a potent star,
Ruling their life at solemn hours and sweet
Of secret sympathy, do they not greet
Each other kindly, when the deep full line
Hath ravish'd both—high as the haunt divine
And presence of celestial Paraclete?
Three thousand years have pass'd since Homer spake,
And many thousand hearts have bless'd his name,
And yet I love them all for Homer's sake,
Child, woman, man, that e'er have felt his flame;
And thine, great Poet, is like power to bind,
In love far distant ages of mankind.

XVIII.

RYDAL.

NIGH to the mansion of a titled dame,
A charitable lady, the recluse,
Begirt with trees too reverend for use,
A village lies, and Rydal is its name.
Its natives know not what is meant by fame;
They little know how men in future time
Will venerate the spot, where prose and rhyme
Too strong for aught but Heaven itself to tame,
Gush'd from a mighty Poet. Yet all calm,
Calm as the antique trunks whose hollow age
The woodman spares, sweet thoughts on every page
Breathe for the soul admonitory balm.
'Tis Nature teaching what she never knew;
The beautiful is good, the good is true.

XIX.

From infancy to retrospective eld,
Year after year, we slide from day to day
Like a sleek stream, from bay to sinuous bay
Wearing the course it evermore hath held.
The crumbling banks, that have so long compell'd
The stream to wind, to haste, to strive, or stay,
Drop down at last and quite choke up the way
That once they foil'd. The river that rebell'd
Becomes a marsh, prolific of ill weeds.
Such is the life of him who streams along
A lazy course, unweeting of his deeds;
Till duty, hope, love, custom, prayers and creeds
Crumble away, and yield to helpless wrong,
That from the mere disuse of right proceeds.

XX.

TO ALFRED TENNYSON.

Long have I known thee as thou art in song,
And long enjoy'd the perfume that exhales
From thy pure soul, and odour sweet entails
And permanence, on thoughts that float along
The stream of life, to join the passive throng
Of shades and echoes that are memory's being
Hearing we hear not, and we see not seeing,
If passion, fancy, faith move not among
The never-present moments of reflection.
Long have I view'd thee in the crystal sphere
Of verse, that, like the beryl, makes appear
Visions of hope, begot of recollection.
Knowing thee now, a real earth-treading man,
Not less I love thee, and no ore I can.

XXI.

I KNOW too little of thee, my dear friend,
Or else too much,—for nothing less than all
Were quite enough to guide me to the end
And fatal purpose of thine earthly call.
I know thy will is stubborn as a wall
Against all acts that trespass or offend.
I know there is no sin or fault so small
Wherewith the current of thy soul would blend;
But yet I know that there is something yet
Which I know not, a burden on thy breast
No joy of earth can make thy heart forget;
The sleepless thought that will not be at rest,
That, like a wee bird struggling in the net,
Still whines and twitters of its distant nest.

April, 1846.

XXII.

TO DR. DALTON.

THIS world so beautiful cannot produce
A thing more beauteous than a head of snow,
Or smoothly bald and bright with sunny glow,
That has been busied still in things of use.
The adventurous restlessness of Scottish Bruce
Led him to trace the backward course of Nile;
But I would rather trace that serious smile,
That seems habitual to a lip, not loose,
Nor yet constrain'd; a brow not wrinkled much,
An eye not dimm'd but disciplined by age.
I could not know thee when thou wast the page
Of the young Lady Science, ere the touch
Unfelt of years had worn thy youth away;
I cannot trace thee to thy youthful day.

XXIII.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

LONG ere my pulse with nascent life had beat,
The ripe spring of thy early Paradise
With many a flower, and fruit, and hallow'd spice,
Was fair to fancy and to feeling sweet.
Time, that is aye reproach'd to be so fleet,
Because dear follies vanish in a trice,
Shall now be clean absolved by judgment nice,
Since his good speed made thee so soon complete.
But less I praise the bounty of old Time,
Lady revered, our Island's Tragic Queen,
For all achievements of thy hope and prime,
Than for the beauty of thine age serene,
That yet delights to weave the moral rhyme,
Nor fears what is, should dim what thou hast been.

XXIV.

ON READING THE MEMOIR OF MISS GRIZZLE BAILLIE.

GENIUS, what is 't? A motion of the brain.
And valour is the toughness of a nerve,
And the strong virtue that will never swerve
Is but the "lazy temperance" of a vein.
And what is pity but a twitching pain,
Seeking its own relief in pious acts?
Thus wisdom, seeking all things to explain,
Out of all good the soul of good detracts.
The simple woman that records the worth
Of the brave saints to whom she owed her birth,
Confutes a doctrine that she never knew.
For goodness, more than ever was perceived
By sense, or in the visible world achieved,
By might of mere believing, she makes true.

XXV

WHILE I survey the long, and deep, and wide
Expanse of time, the Past with things that were
Throng'd in dark multitude; the Future bare
As the void sky when not a star beside
The thin pale moon is seen; the race that died
While yet the families of earth were rare,
And human kind had but a little share
Of the world's heritage, before me glide
All dim and silent. Now with sterner mien
Heroic shadows, names renown'd in song,
Rush by. And, deck'd with garlands ever green,
In light and music sweep the bards along;
And many a fair, and many a well-known face,
Into the future dive, and blend with empty space.

XXVI.

Ah me! It is the saddest thing on earth
To see a change where much is yet unchanged,
To mark a face, not alter'd, but estranged
From its own wonted self, by its own hearth
So sadly smiling, like the ghost of mirth,
That cannot quite desert its long abode.
The very sigh that lifts the weary load
Of pain, and loosens the constraining girth
Within the breast, a semi-tone of laughter;
Though joy to woe, as light to shade is turn'd,
The trick of joy is not so soon unlearn'd:
The substance flits, the shadow lingers after.
The soul once rich in joy, though poor it be,
Will yet be bounteous in its poverty.

XXVII.

Accuse not gracious Nature of neglect,
Nor doubt the wise intent of Providence,
Because a human thing not quick of sense,
With scarce a twinkling spark of intellect,
With much of body's, more of mind's defect,
Hath hobbled upon earth for eighty years;
And now, unconscious of the hopes and fears
That the past life of wiser men dissect,
Is dozing deathward. Deep and dark immured
The corn-seed in the dead-throng'd catacomb,
From light shut out, was yet from blight secured
And Turk and Mam'luke, in oblivious tomb:
And thus, for eighty years, good man, in thee
The seed has slept, sepulchred in simplicity.

XXVIII.

MUSIC.

SWEET music steals along the yielding soul,
Like the brisk wind that sows autumnal seeds;
And it hath tones like vernal rain that feeds
The light green vale, ordain'd ere long to roll
In golden waves o'er many a wealthy rood;
And tones it hath, that make a lonely hour
The silent dwelling of some lovely flower,
Sweet Hermitess of Forest solitude.
I loved sweet Music when I was a child,
For then my mother used to sing to me:
I loved it better when a youth so wild,
With thoughts of love it did so well agree;
Fain would I love it to my latest day,
If it would teach me to believe and pray.

XXIX.

Oh! that a tone were lasting as a thought,
A feeling joy, eternal as a truth!
Then were my spirits charm'd to endless youth,
All time enrich'd with what a moment brought.
That one sweet note, so sweet itself, and fraught
With all the warbled sweetness of the stream
Of rippling sound, continuous as a dream—
A dream of song, that waking turns to nought.
I cannot find it, I cannot resume
The thrilling calm, the gladness so intense,
So simple, perfect, neither soul nor sense
For hope had need, for hoarding thought had room:
Yet shall the moral heart for aye retain
The once-seen songstress, and the once-heard strain.

XXX.

I WOULD, my friend, indeed, thou hadst been here
Last night, beneath the shadowy sycamore,
To hear the lines, to me well known before,
Embalm'd in music so translucent clear.
Each word of thine came singly to the ear,
Yet all was blended in a flowing stream.
It had the rich repose of summer dream,
The light distinct of frosty atmosphere.
Still have I loved thy verse, yet never knew
How sweet it was, till woman's voice invested
The pencill'd outline with the living hue,
And every note of feeling proved and tested.
What might old Pindar be, if once again
The harp and voice were trembling with his strain.

XXXI.

DIANA AND ENDYMION.

It was a learned fancy, that bestowed
A living spirit and a human will
On those far lights that, whether fixt and still,
Or moving visibly along the road,
Were mighty to predestine, rule, forbode;
Yea, to disclose, to long observant skill,
Not season's course alone, but good and ill,
For aye appointed in no changeful code.
A freer, yet a gentler wit, devised
That quaint old Fable, that beheld the moon
Gazing for hours on her Endymion,
Till she turned pale, by jocund morn surprised;
While he, wrapped up in trance or vision dim,
Sleeps in her sight that ever wakes for him.

XXXII.

ECLIPSE.

So pure, so clear, amid the vast blue lake,
Sole regent of the many-scattered isles,
Making of myriad million, billion miles
One beauty, floats she brilliantly awake,
Unconscious of the doom that must o'ertake
Her maidenhood before the night goes by,
And make a lurid blot upon the sky,
And all her cheer transform to dim opaque.
But happy art thou, Moon; no fault of thine,
No just displeasure of thy lord, the Sun,
Clothes thee in weed of penance, murk and dun;
For thine own self thou still art free to shine.
That earth which moves between mankind and thee,
Inflicts no stain upon thy purity.

XXXIII.

TO AN AGED BEAUTY.

ONCE thou wert young, 'twas very long ago,
Yet some there are to whom thy fixt idea,
Even now, is fresh as sea-born Cytherea.
The waves of time, that ever backward flow,
Behind them leave the quiet tints that glow
On each successive billow. Months, nor years,
Nor maddest mirth, nor dim heart-wasting tears
Attaint the truths that true minds truly know.
Once thou wert young, and still art young to me,
Though fifty summers faded since we met;
Thy timid glance I cannot cease to see,
Thy bird-like voice to me is piping yet.
If Time turn back to say that thou art old;
I 'll swear he lies, and will thy youth uphold.

XXXIV.

I saw thee in the beauty of thy spring,
And then I thought how blest the man shall be
That shall persuade thy maiden modesty
To hearken to his fond soliciting.
Thou wert so fair, so exquisite a thing,
I thought the very dust on which thy feet
Had left their mark exhaled a scent more sweet
Than honey-dew dropt from an angel's wing.
I see thee now a matron and a mother,
And I, alas! am old before my day.
Both to myself and thee I owe another—
A holier passion, a devouter lay.
Each spark of earthly fire I now must smother,
And wish for nought for which I dare not pray.

XXXV.

TO MISS MARTHA H——.

MARTHA, thy maiden foot is still so light.
It leaves no legible trace on virgin snows,
And yet I ween that busily it goes
In duty's path from happy morn to night.
Thy dimpled cheek is gay, and softly bright
As the fixt beauty of the mossy rose;
Yet will it change its hue for other's woes,
And native red contend with piteous white.
Thou bear'st a name by Jesus known and loved,
And Jesus gently did the maid reprove
For too much haste to show her eager love.
But blest is she that may be so reproved.
Be Martha still in deed and good endeavour,
In faith like Mary, at His feet for ever.

XXXVI.

SECOND NUPTIALS.

THERE is no jealousy in realms above:
The spirit purified from earthly stain,
And knowing that its earthly loss was gain,
Transfers its property in earthly love
(Tho' love it was she does not yet reprove)
To her by Heaven appointed to sustain
The honour'd matron's part; to bear the pain,
The joy, the duty, all things that behove
A Christian wedded. She that dwells on high
May be a guardian angel to the wife
That her good husband chooses to supply
Her place, vacated in the noon of life;
With holy gladness may support the bride
Through happy cares to her by death denied.

XXXVII.

Nor in one clime we oped the infant eye
To the blank light of yet unmeaning day;
Nor in one language timely taught to pray,
Did we lisp out the babies' liturgy.
But even then, we both alike did sing
Our joys and sorrows in the self-same way,
Instinct the same sweet native tune did play,
From laugh to smile, from sob to chasten'd sigh,
Our tutor'd spirits were alike subdued.
What wonder, then, if, meeting in this isle,
We eke imperfect speech with sigh and smile,
The catholic speech of infancy renew'd.
True love is still a child, and then most true
When most it talks, and does as children do.

XXXVIII.

Two nations are there of one common stock;
One in the heart of Europe fortified,
The other freshen'd by the daily tide
Shaping from age to age her bulwark rock.
Two faithful members of the holy flock,
In the most holy bond of love allied,
Unite the valour, worth, and selfless pride
Of two great kindreds, like a braided lock—
A braided lock, I've seen—so nicely braided,
With softest interchange of brown and gold,
Each into each so exquisitely shaded,
That they were ever twain could not be told.
E'en so for thee, sweet daughter of my friend,
May Albion and Allmain their virtues blend.

XXXIX.

RIGHT merry lass, thy overweening joy
Turns an old man into a merry boy.
One hour with thee pays off the long arrears,
The heavy debt of almost fifty years.
Oft have I view'd that lake so beautiful,
And felt its quiet power, benign, to lull
The inward being to a soft repose ;
Patient, yet not forgetful of the woes
That are the heritage of mortal breath,
As if one note divided life and death.
But thou, sweet maid, with ready mirth dost fill
The wide survey of water, wood, and hill.
I feel a pulse of pleasure newly born,
And scarce believe that "man was made to mourn."

XL.

KESWICK.

THE Church is holy still, and consecrate
To mute attention and meek whispering prayer,
Though *he*,—the mighty voice, no more is there,
That gave the high roof a religious weight,
And the tall shaft upraised with hope elate,
And hallow'd all the holy well of air.
With duteous footstep to the church repair
Where lies the good, the kind, the wise, the great.
Old Skiddaw stands upon his base so long,
And Wallow Crag is yet a bastion proud,
And rough Lodore with thunder-rain is loud,
And Greta murmurs yet her ancient song.
Revere the vale, where SOUTHEY'S corpse is laid,
Nor fear to pray—where he so long has pray'd.

XLI.

EDWARD—A CHILD AND MAN.

I saw thee, Edward, when thy baby cries
Sounded in mother's ears a swift alarm ;
I saw thee cradled on thy father's arm,
When he, with many smiles and many sighs,
Guess'd in the quick gleam of thy new wak'd eyes
The inward stirrings, not matured to thought,
Not broken to the curb of *must* and *ought*,
And yet instinct with all thy destinies.
I see thee now a far experienced man,
Who from late boyhood to the rear of youth
Hast seen in many lands new forms of truth,
And haply learned with foreign eye to scan
Old England's faults ; yet dost thou fondly love her,
And with a true friend's boldness, dost reprove her.

XLII.

TO MISS ISABELLA FENWICK.

FAIN would I put my meanings in the tongue
Familiar, lady, to thy earliest years,
That gives the finest edge to social jeers;
The language, which by merry bard was sung
In times of old, to ladies fair, among
The courts devoted to sublime amours
By gay trouveurs, and knightly troubadours,
Accents o'er which the Scottish Mary hung
Her beauteous head enamour'd. Yet I trust
Thou wilt not scorn the talk of this old isle,
The tongue which Milton raised to themes sublime,
On which keen Pope bestowed his poignance just,
Which Cowper graced with melancholy smile,
And Spenser hallowed with immortal rhyme.

XLIII.

WRITTEN IN A SEASON OF PUBLIC DISTURBANCE.

CALM is the sky: the trees are very calm.
The mountains seem as they would melt away,
So soft their outline mingles with the day.
Surely no sound less holy than a psalm
Should interrupt the stillness and the balm
Of such a morn, whose grave monastic grey
Clothes the meek east in garment meek to pray
With sweet humility, without a qualm.
And yet, even now, in this most blessed hour,
Who knows but that the murderous shot is sped
In the fell jar of poverty and power?
The man but now that lived, may now be dead.
Has Nature of her human brood no care,
That on their bloody deeds she smiles so fair?

XLIV.

TO MRS. CHARLES FOX.

Now the old trees are striving to be young,
And the gay mosses of the Christmas days
To the fresh primrose must forego their praise:
Now every flower by vernal poets sung,
And every bird the [bursting] woods among,
And all the many-dappled banks and braes,
Recal remembrance of immortal lays,
But speak to me in a forgotten tongue.
Yea, dearest lady, they do speak to me
As to a banish'd man that hath forgot
Almost his mother's language, and cannot,
Without sore pain and stress of memory,
Reply to words that yet he hears with joy,
And by their strangeness make him half a boy.

XLV.

TO MRS. ——

SWEET lady, thou art come to us again:
The mountains still are in their ancient seats;
Still on the turfy mound the young lamb bleats,
Whose coat of March is washed with April rain.
But since no Philomel can here complain,
Let, lady, one poor bard lament to thee
The murderous death of many a noble tree,
That wont to shade thee in the grassy lane.
Would that religion of old time were ours,
(In that one article, not all the others,)
Which the first Romans held, who reared the towers,
Nigh the moist cradle of the Foundling Brothers,
The faith that did in awe and love instal,
For many an age the Fig-Tree Ruminal.*

* The Fig-Tree Ruminal,—*Ficus ruminalis*, beneath which Romulus and Remus, according to the tradition, were found by the shepherd Faustulus.

XLVI.

TO LOUISE CLAUDE.

I WOULD not take my leave of thee, dear child,
With customary words of compliment:
Nor will I task my fancy to invent
A fond conceit, or sentence finely filed;
Nor shall my heart with passionate speech and wild,
Bewail thy parting in a drear lament.
Wit is not meet for one so innocent,
Nor passionate woe for one so gaily mild.
I will not bid thee think of me, nor yet
Would I in thy young memory perish quite.
I am a waning star, and nigh to set;
Thou art a morning beam of waxing light;
But sure the morning star can ne'er regret
That once 'twas grey-haired evening's favourite.

XLVII.

HOPE.

HOPE, I have seen thee oft by pilgrim hand
Of vagrant artist vividly pourtray'd
In the sweet likeness of a wishing maid,
Content from day to day on ocean strand,
Loving the long-drawn wrinkles of the sand
Wrought by the incessant ingress of the sea,
Because the waves are rolling from the land
Where the dear lad is now, where'er it be.
See how the maid upon the anchor leans,
Gazing beyond the long horizon's bound.
Rude is the picture, but a truth profound
Wakes in the heart to tell you what it means;
For Hope still stands beside the vast dark sea,
Watching the tides of blank futurity.

XLVIII.

FREEDOM.

SAY, what is freedom ? What the life of souls
Which all who know are bound to keep, or die,
And who knows not is dead ? In vain we pry
In the dark archives and tenacious scrolls
Of written law, tho' Time embrace the rolls
In his lank arms, and shed his yellow light
On every barbarous word. Eternal Right
Works its own way, and evermore controls
Its own free essence. Liberty is duty,
Not license. Every pulse that beats
At the glad summons of imperious beauty
Obeys a law. The very cloud that fleets
Along the dead green surface of the hill
Is ruled and scatter'd by a Godlike will.

XLIX.

TO H. W.

In days of old, if any days be old,
Beneath the shadow of the ancient hill,
We roam'd together by the wandering rill;
Thou a light-footed hunter, free and bold,
And I a straggler from the self-same fold,
Rough, ragged, wild, with haggard looks that still
Dwelt on the ground, as if predestined ill
Blighted the joy of youth. Twelve years are told,
And now we meet again; thou, like the wind
That drives the grey cloud to the infinite sea,
Hast traversed all the world's variety,
From Western Isles to Oriental Ind;
I am the lazy pod among the heather
That slumbers sound in spite of wind and weather.

L.

TO H. N. COLERIDGE.

KINSMAN—yea, more than kinsman—brother, friend,—
O more than kinsman! more than friend or brother!
My sister's spouse, son to my widow'd mother!—
How shall I praise thee right, and not offend?
For thou wert sent a sore heart-ill to mend.
Twin stars were ye, thou and thy wedded love,
Benign of aspect as those imps of Jove,
In antique faith commission'd to portend
To sad sea-wanderers peace; or like the tree
By Moses cast into the bitter pool,
Which made the tear-salt water fresh and cool;
Or even as spring, that sets the boon earth free—
Free to be good, exempt from winter's rule:
Such hast thou been to our poor family.

LI.

FAITH.

How much thy Holy Name hath been misused,
Beginner of all good, all-mighty Faith!
Some men thy blessed symbols have abused,
Making them badge or secret shibboleth
For greed accepted, or for spite refused,
Or just endured in fear of pain or death.
To some, by fearful conscience self-accused,
Thou com'st a goblin self, a hideous wraith!
With such as these thou art an inward strife,
A shame, a misery, and a death in life,
A self-asserting, self-disputing lie;
A thing to unbelief so near allied,
That it would gladly be a suicide,
And only lives because it dare not die.

LII.

FEAR.

Dim child of darkness and faint-echoing space,
That still art just behind, and never here,
Death's herald shadow, unimagined Fear;
Thou antic, that dost multiply a face,
Which hath no self, but finds in every place
A body, feature, voice, and circumstance,
Yet art most potent in the wide expanse
Of unbelief,—may I beseech thy grace?
Thou art a spirit of no certain clan,
For thou wilt fight for either God or Devil.
Man is thy slave, and yet thy lord is man;
The human heart creates thee good or evil:
As goblin, ghost, or fiend I ne'er have known thee,
But as myself, my sinful self, I own thee.

LIII.

PRAYER.

THERE is an awful quiet in the air,
And the sad earth, with moist imploring eye,
Looks wide and wakeful at the pondering sky,
Like Patience slow subsiding to Despair.
But see, the blue smoke as a voiceless prayer,
Sole witness of a secret sacrifice,
Unfolds its tardy wreaths, and multiplies
Its soft chameleon breathings in the rare
Capacious ether,—so it fades away,
And nought is seen beneath the pendent blue,
The undistinguishable waste of day.
So have I dream'd!—oh, may the dream be true!—
That praying souls are purged from mortal hue,
And grow as pure as He to whom they pray.

LIV.

THERE was a seed which the impassive wind,
Now high, now low, now piping loud, now mute,
Or, like the last note of a trembling lute,
The loved abortion of a thing design'd,
Or half-said prayer for good of human-kind,
Wafted along for ever, ever, ever.
It sought to plant itself; but never, never,
Could that poor seed or soil or water find.
And yet it was a seed which, had it found,
By river's brink or rocky mountain cleft,
A kindly shelter and a genial ground,
Might not have perish'd, quite of good bereft;
Might have some perfume, some faint echo left,
Faint as the echo of the Sabbath sound.

LV.

FROM MICHAEL ANGELO.

THE might of one fair face sublimes my love;
For it hath wean'd my heart from low desires,
Nor death I need, nor purgatorial fires.
Thy beauty, antepart of joys above,
Instructs me in the bliss that saints approve;
For oh! how good, how beautiful must be
The God that made so good a thing as thee,
So fair an image of the heavenly Dove.
Forgive me if I cannot turn away
From those sweet eyes that are my earthly heaven,
For they are guiding stars benignly given
To tempt my footsteps to the upward way;
And if I dwell too fondly in thy sight,
I live and love in God's peculiar light.

LVI.

STILL for the world he lives, and lives in bliss,
For God and for himself. Ten years and three
Have now elapsed since he was dead to me
And all that were on earth intensely his.
Not in the dim domain of Gloomy Dis,
The death-god of the ever-guessing Greek,
Nor in the paradise of Houris sleek
I think of him whom I most sorely miss.
The sage, the poet, lives for all mankind,
As long as truth is true, or beauty fair.
The soul that ever sought its God to find
Has found Him now—no matter how, or where.
Yet can I not but mourn because he died
That was my father, should have been my guide.

SONNETS SUGGESTED BY THE SEASONS.

I.

FEBRUARY 1ST, 1842.

ONE month is past, another is begun,
Since merry bells rung out the dying year,
And buds of rarest green began to peer,
As if impatient for a warmer sun;
And though the distant hills are bleak and dun,
The virgin snowdrop, like a lambent fire,
Pierces the cold earth with its green-streak'd spire;
And in dark woods the wandering little one
May find a primrose. Thus the better mind
Puts forth some flowers, escaped from Paradise,
Though faith be dim as faintest wintry skies,
And passion fierce as January wind.
O God, vouchsafe a sunbeam clear and kind,
To cheer the pining flow'ret ere it dies.

II.

MARCH, 1846.

Now Nature in her vernal green is clad,
And windy March puts on the robe of May;
The primrose is abroad, the buds half-way
Open their lips; all things are blithe and glad:
Then wherefore should I droop in semblance sad,
And contradict the promise of the air?
Ah, me! I can but think of those that were,
And now are not—of those dear friends I had,
And have not. Alice, thou art very meek,
And hast the faith that makes affliction good.
It would be wholesome to my perilous mood
If I could see the tear upon thy cheek.
Methinks we could talk out a day—a week,
Of those we loved. Oh, Alice! would we could.

III.

THE VERNAL SHOWER.

WELCOME once more, my pretty Lady Spring:
So young a Spring we have not seen for years.
Even thy brief morning fit of girlish tears
Was bright and sweet as droppings from the wing
Of kindly sylph, through ether voyaging
On some good errand to the distant spheres;
And every bud and blade, to which adheres
The pure aspersion, seems a conscious thing,
Renew'd in spirit. Light the birdie leaps,
Shaking translucent gems from every spray;
And merrily down the many-shadow'd steeps
The streamlets whiten, all in new array.
Joy to the vale if Summer do but keep
The bounteous promise of this April day.

GRASMERE, *April*, 1842.

IV.

1ST OF APRIL, 1845.

SWEET month of Venus, meekly thus begun,
Too pensive for a day of antique folly,
In yellow garb of quiet melancholy
Thy patient pastures sleep beside the sun;
And if a primrose peep, there is but one
Where wont the starry crowd to look so jolly.
Alone, amid the wood, the Christmas holly
Gleams on the bank with streaming rain fordone,
And yet the snowdrop and the daffodils
Have done their duty to the almanack.
And though the garden mould is blank and black,
With bloom and scent the gay mezereon fills
The longing sense; and plants of other climes
In the warm greenhouse tell of better times.

V.

MAY, 1840.

A LOVELY morn, so still, so very still,
It hardly seems a growing day of Spring,
Though all the odorous buds are blossoming,
And the small matin birds were glad and shrill
Some hours ago; but now the woodland rill
Murmurs along, the only vocal thing,
Save when the wee wren flits with stealthy wing,
And cons by fits and bits her evening trill.
Lovers might sit on such a morn as this
An hour together, looking at the sky,
Nor dare to break the silence with a kiss,
Long listening for the signal of a sigh;
And the sweet Nun, diffused in voiceless prayer,
Feel her own soul through all the brooding air.

VI.

MAY MORNING.

In days of yore, while yet the world was young,
Fair nymphs arose to grace the morn of May,
And ere the East had doffed the pearly grey,
Went forth to catch the jewell'd drops that hung
On the fresh virgin leaves the woods among;
And many a delicate foot-mark might be seen,
Tinting the silvery lawn with darker green;
And many a bird, untimely waked, upsprung,
Scattering the maythorn's white. O lovely season,
Where art thou gone? Methinks the cold neglect
Of thy old rites, perchance may be the reason
Thou wilt not punctual keep thy wonted time,
But, angry at our slothful disrespect,
Carest not to quit some duteous happier clime.

VII.

MAY 25TH, 1840.

How strange the cold ungenial atmosphere,
Beneath the cover of so bright a sky!
Each way-side flower hath oped its little eye;
The very coyest birds of all the year
Have ventured forth to see if all be clear.
Full-leaved the pendant birches droop and sigh;
The oak is clothed in vernal majesty;
White-chaliced lilies float upon the mere.
The very warmth that made this world of beauty
Is summon'd to another tract of duty,
And leaves a substitute so stern and cold,
We half regret old winter's honest rule,
The roaring chimney and the log of yule:
May hath such airs as May had not of old.

VIII.

TO DORA QUILLINAN.

WELL, this is really like the poet's May,
The merry May of which we used to hear,
Big with the promise of the coming year!
The apple-trees their rosy bloom display,
The flowerets, many-hued, that line the way,
Long-soak'd with rain, and chill'd with whistling blast,
Look happy now, like maidens, that at last
Are to be wedded, after long delay.
Oh! that the joy, the fragrance, and the bloom,
That bid all life and even poor man be glad,
Might waft a breath of comfort to the room
Where she lies smitten, yet not wholly sad,
Waiting with frame immortal to be clad,
In patient expectation of her doom!

IX.

Oh, what a joy is in the vernal air!
For Nature now is like a budding girl,
Whose merry laugh displays, more white than pearl,
Teeth that make lovers old as me despair.
And yet, though Time has written on my hair
A notice from all amorous thoughts to part,
This day persuades long slumbering hopes to start,
Like cuckoo notes, from winter's drowsy lair.
Yet, my young love, I hope not for the thing
That is the prism of my soul. Oh, no!
I scorn the wish that to my love would bring
Laborious days, and poverty, and woe.
I only wish thou mayst beloved be
By a much better man, as I love thee.

X.

AUTUMN FLOWERS.

THE flowers of Spring, they come in sweet succession,
Snowdrop and crocus, and mezereon, thick
Studded with blossom upon leafless stick,
And the young ivy, ceaseless in progression;
They triumph in their hour of brief possession.
Then Summer comes, with her voluptuous rose,
And sweet carnation in half-blown repose;
The plant where pious maids discern the passion,
The death by which we live. But I was born
When the good year was like a man of fifty,
When the wild crabtree show'd a naked thorn,
And tall brown fern disguised the red deer's horn;
Like meats upon a board, august and thrifty,
Large flowers blaze out at intervals forlorn.

XI.

SEPTEMBER.

THE dark green Summer, with its massive hues,
Fades into Autumn's tincture manifold.
A gorgeous garniture of fire and gold
The high slope of the ferny hill indues.
The mists of morn in slumbering layers diffuse
O'er glimmering rock, smooth lake, and spiked array
Of hedge-row thorns, a unity of grey.
All things appear their tangible form to lose
In ghostly vastness. But anon the gloom
Melts, as the Sun puts off his muddy veil;
And now the birds their twittering songs resume,
All Summer silent in the leafy dale.
In Spring they piped of love on every tree,
But now they sing the song of memory.

XII.

NOVEMBER.

Now the last leaves are hanging on the trees,
And very few the flowers that glint along
The deep dark lanes and braes, erewhile as throng
With peeping posies as the limes with bees;
Nought in the garden but stiff sticks of peas,
And climbing weeds inextricably strong;
And scarce a fragment of autumnal song
Whistles above the surly morning breeze.
Yet still at eve we hear the merry owl,
That sings not sweetly, but he does his best;
The little brown bird with the scarlet vest
Chirrups away, though distant storms do howl.
Then let us not at dark November scowl,
But wait for Christmas with a cheerful breast.

XIII.

WRITTEN IN A PERIOD OF GREAT MONETARY DISTRESS.

THOUGH Night and Winter are two gloomy things,
Yet Night has stars, and Winter has the moss,
And the wee pearly goblets that emboss
The lumbering wall on which the redbreast sings.
Now the old year spreads wide his dusky wings,
And hovers o'er his many children dead;
Few are the blessings on his hoary head,
Bestow'd by hearts whom cruel memory wrings,
And sad forebodings, for no stars are seen
In the dull night and winter of distress.
The chalked mosses and the velvet green,
That clothe November with a seemly dress,
As furry spoils that cheer the red-haired Russ,
Shield not the poor from blasts impiteous.

Nov. 3, 1847.

XIV.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

WAS it a fancy, bred of vagrant guess,
Or well-remember'd fact, that *He* was born
When half the world was wintry and forlorn,
In Nature's utmost season of distress?
And did the simple earth indeed confess
Its destitution and its craving need,
Wearing the white and penitential weed,
Meet symbol of judicial barrenness?
So be it; for in truth 'tis ever so,
That when the winter of the soul is bare,
The seed of heaven at first begins to grow
Peeping abroad in desert of despair.
Full many a floweret, good, and sweet, and fair,
Is kindly wrapp'd in coverlet of snow.

XV.

ON A CALM DAY TOWARDS THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

THERE never was an hour of purer peace!
Methinks old Time, in mere mortality,
Gives up the ghost, contented not to be,
And all the pulses of great Nature cease.
Whate'er betokens hope, life, or increase,
The gladsome expectation, or the dread
Of chance and change upon to-morrow fed,
Await the expiration of their lease
In dumb dull apathy. Not on the tree
Stirs the brown leaf; or, if detached, it drop,
So very slow it wavers to the ground
One might suppose that central gravity,
Prime law of nature, were about to stop:
Ne'er died a year with spirit so profound.

Dec. 1835.

XVI.

DECEMBER, 1838.

THE poor old year upon its deathbed lies;
Old trees lift up their branches manifold,
Spiry and stern, inveterately old;
Their bare and patient poverty defies
The fickle humour of inconstant skies.
All chill and distant, the great monarch Sun
Beholds the last days of his minion.
What is 't to him how soon the old year dies?
Yet some things are, but lowly things and small,
That wait upon the old year to the last;
Some wee birds pipe a feeble madrigal,
Thrilling kind memories of the summer past;
Some duteous flowers put on their best array
To do meet honour to their lord's decay.

XVII.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

A NEW-YEAR'S day! Time was that I was glad
When the new year was usher'd into life
With midnight fiddle, morning drum and fife.
I wonder'd then how any could be sad
Because another year had gone to add
One figure to the date of human strife.
And yet I knew that sin and pain were rife,
That age would fain be cold, that youth was mad:—
All this I knew, yet, knowing, ne'er believed;
And now I know it, and believe it too:
But yet I am not of all grace bereaved;
I wish the hope that hath myself deceived
May, like the happy year, itself renew,
And be at least to one dear maiden true.

SONNETS AND OTHER POEMS

ON

BIRDS, INSECTS, AND FLOWERS.

HUMMING BIRDS.

THE insect birds that suck nectareous juice
From straightest tubes of curly-petaled flowers,
Or catch the honey-dew that falls profuse
Through the soft air, distill'd in viewless showers;
Whose colours seem the very souls of gems,
Or parting rays of fading diadems:—

I have but seen their feathers,—that is all.
As much as we can know of poets dead
Or living; but the gilded plumes that fall
Float on the earth, or in the wind dispread
Go everywhere to beautify the breeze.
Sweet wind, surcharged with treasures such as these,

I may not feel:—I never may behold
The spark of life, that trimmed in garb so bright
That flying quintessence of ruby, gold,
Mild emerald, and lucid chrysolite.
Yet am I glad that life and joy were there,
That the small creature was as blithe as fair.

THE CRICKET.

The Naturalist of the Supplement to the British Almanack tells me that Crickets rusticate in Summer, and return to their firesides in Winter. I would I knew this for a fact.

WHERE art thou, merry whistler of the hearth?
What time the grate is stuffed with arid moss,
I miss thy shrill monotony of mirth,
And do not love the bar's ferruginous gloss,
When summer nights are blinking-dark and cold,
And the dim taper cheerless to behold.

I thought thee sleeping in some cranny snug,
Insensible to human weal or woe,
Till earlier night bids shake the lazy rug,
And lifts the poker for decisive blow.
But thou hast left thy ashy winter mansion
To air thy crisp cased wings in wide expansion.

If I should see thee in thy summer dress,
'Tis odds if I should know thee, winter friend;
The love I have not, but revere no less,
That can so closely to thy ways attend.
And glad am I the cricket has a share
Of the wide summer, and the ample air.

LINES

WRITTEN OPPOSITE A DRAWING OF A PARROT AND BUTTERFLY.

BRIGHT creatures are ye, bird and butterfly,
The joyous progeny of the breeding sun,
Who worked below, his "'prentice hand to try,"
On topaz, ruby, and carnelian.
Then, breathing upwards, first essayed the rose,
Sweet emanation of the soul of earth;
Then would the gilded fly its wings disclose,
Proud of the beauty of its gorgeous birth.
But brightest gems would murmur, if they might,
Because for woman, not themselves, they glow.
Blest are the insects, brood of warmth and light,
Who feel their life, how brief they cannot know;
But happier far the bird that can repeat
Sweet words, by sweeter lips made doubly sweet.

"When Messrs. Hawes and Fellowes ascended Mont Blanc in July, 1827, they observed a butterfly near the summit. Mr. C. Shewell saw two crimson moths at nearly the same elevation."

—•—

Who would have thought, upon this icy cliff,
Where never ibex bounded,
Nor foot of chamois sounded,
Where scarce the soaring hippogriff
Would venture, unless truly,
To this exalted Thule,
He carried the thought of a metaphysician,
Or theory of an electrician;—
Who would have dream'd of seeing thee,
Softest of summer's progeny?
What art thou seeking? What hast thou lost?
That before the throne of eternal frost
Thou comest to spread the crimson wing,
Thou pretty fluttering thing?

Art thou too fine for the world below?
Or hast thou lived out thy joy and thy spring?
And hast thou sworn
To live forlorn
An anchorite in a cave of snow,
Or Palmer lonely wandering?

Or dost thou fancy, as many have done,
That, because the hill-top is nearest the sun,
The sun loves better the unthawed ice,
That does nothing but say that he is bright,
And dissect, like a prism, his braided light—
Than the gardens of bloom and the fields of spice?
Didst thou think that the bright orb his mystery shrouds
In a comfortless mantle of sleet-driving clouds?
Alas! he never loved this place;
It bears no token of his grace;
But many a mark of the tempest's lash,
And many a brand of the sulphurous flash.
'Tis better to dwell among corn-fields and flowers,
Or even the weeds of this world of ours,
Than to leave the green vale and the sunny slope,
To seek the cold cliff with a desperate hope.
Flutter he, flutter he, high as he will,
A butterfly is but a butterfly still.

And 'tis better for us to remain where we are,
In the lowly valley of duty and care,
Than lonely to stray to the heights above,
Where there 's nothing to do, and nothing to love.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

A MIGHTY bard there was, in joy of youth,
That wont to rove the vernal groves among,
When the green oak puts forth its scallop'd tooth,
And daisies thick the darkening fallows throng;
He listen'd oft, whene'er he sought to soothe
A fancied sorrow with a fancied song,
For Philomela's ancient tale of ruth,
And never heard it, all the long night long;
But heard, instead, so glad a strain of sound,
So many changes of continuous glee,
From lowest twitter, such a quick rebound,
To billowy height of troubled ecstasy—
Rejoice! he said, for joyfully had he found
That mighty poets may mistaken be.*

* See Coleridge's Poems, Vol. i., p. 211.

Sunday, Sept. 27th, 1840.

THE CUCKOO.

THOU indefatigable cuckoo! still
Thy iteration says the self-same thing;
And thou art still an utterance of the spring
As constant as a self-determined will.
The quiet patience of a murmuring rill
Had no beginning and will have no ending;
But thou art aye beginning, never blending
With thrush on perch, or lark upon the wing.
Methinks thou art a type of some recluse
Whose notes of adoration never vary:
Who of the gift of speech will make no use
But ever to repeat her Ave Mary.—
Two syllables alone to thee were given,
What mean they in the dialect of heaven?

May 22nd, 1848.

THE ANEMONE.

WHO would have thought a thing so slight,
So frail a birth of warmth and light,
A thing as weak as fear or shame,
Bearing thy weakness in thy name,—
Who would have thought of finding thee,
Thou delicate Anemone,
Whose faintly tinted petals may
By any wind be torn away,
Whose many anthers with their dust,
And the dark purple dome their centre,
When winter strikes, soon as it likes,
Will quit their present rest, and must
Hurry away on wild adventure?
What power has given thee to outlast
The pelting rain, the driving blast;
To sit upon thy slender stem,
A solitary diadem,
Adorning latest autumn with
A relic sweet of vernal pith?

Oh Heaven! if, as faithful I believe,
Thou wilt the prayer of faithful love receive,
Let it be so with me! I was a child—
Of large belief, though froward, wild.
Gladly I listened to the holy word,
And deem'd my little prayers to God were heard.
All things I loved, however strange or odd,
As deeming all things were beloved by God.
In youth and manhood's careful sultry hours,
The garden of my youth bore many flowers
That now are faded; but my early faith,
Though thinner far than vapour, spectre, wraith,
Lighter than aught the rude wind blows away,
Has yet outlived the rude tempestuous day,
And may remain, a witness of the spring,
A sweet, a holy, and a lovely thing;
The promise of another spring to me,
My lovely, lone, and lost Anemone!

EUPHRASIA OFFICINALIS, OR EYE-BRIGHT.

THERE is a flower, a tiny flower,
Its hue is white, but close within 't
There is a spot of golden tint,
Therein abides a wondrous juice,
That hath, for such as know its use,
A sweet and holy power.

It is the little Euphrasy,
Which you no doubt have often seen
Mid the tall grass of meadow green;
But never deem'd so wee a wight
Endow'd with medicinal might
To clear the darken'd eye.

And maybe now it hath no more
The virtue which the kindly fays
Bestow'd in fancy's holy days;
Yet still the gold-eyed weedie springs,
To show how pretty little things
Were hallow'd long of yore.

THE COWSLIP.

LADY, beyond the wide Atlantic main
Huge trees hast thou beheld, and gorgeous flowers,
And poor may be to thee, and dim, and plain
The simple posies of this isle of ours;
Yet, lady, humbly I present to thee
A flower refined in her simplicity.
The lady cowslip, that, amid the grass,
Is tall and comely as a virgin queen.
The primrose is a bonny peasant lass,
The bold and full-blown beauty of the green;
She seems on mossy bank, in forest glade,
Most meet to be the cowslip's waiting maid.
But the coy cowslip—coy, though doom'd to stand
In state erect upon the open field—
Declines her head, the lady of the land
That must be public, fain would be conceal'd,
Knowing how much she ought to all impart,
Yet much retaining with an artless art;

For there is beauty in the cowslip bell
That must be sought for ere it can be spied,
And her pure perfume must be known full well
Before its goodness can be testified;
And therefore do I give the flower to thee,
Thinking thee better than I know or see.

THE COWSLIP AND THE LARK.

My pretty lady cowslip! prim and shy,
Dress'd in the vernal garb of Roman bride,
I wish thee sometimes in a long road-side
My solitary dream to purify.
And thou, bold lark! thou shivering voice on high!
Invisible warbler of the blue expanse!
Why wilt thou not, my merry bird, advance,
And glad Winander with thy minstrelsy?
The fancy sweet of Persia feign'd the love
Of the voluptuous rose and nightingale.
And Kent flows on,—the merry lark above
And the meek cowslip bending in the vale;—
What if there be mysterious love between
The brave bird of the sky and floweret of the green.

ON A BUNCH OF COWSLIPS,

GROWN NEAR THE WRAY, AND PRESENTED TO THE AUTHOR BY A LADY.

SWEET stranger lady, of a southern land,
And hast thou ventured so far north away?
Has the soft magic of a lady's hand
Evoked thy slimness from the cold north clay?

Thy sister Primrose is a damsel bold
That will be found, mayhap before we seek;
Thou art a lady, coy, yet not so cold,
Tall and erect, though modest, yet not weak.

Thou art not lively in thy bashful mood,
But rather, like a sweet devoted Nun,
Fearing the guile of selfish solitude,
Content of many sisters to be one.

I cannot look upon thee, delicate plant,
Nor taste the gentleness of thy perfume,
And not conceive the living world too scant
To give thy beauties and thy meanings room.

What time the Fairies made their orbs of green,
And gave to every herb mysterious power,
Thou wert the chosen crest of Elfin Queen,
Her banner tall in battle's perilous hour.

When eve of May, and all its wizard spells,
Was aye succeeded by the glad May morn,
The pendant Cowslip, with its silent bells,
Adorn'd the pole by village maidens borne.

When London yet was but a scatter'd town,
Dotting gay fields and garden with her towers,
And gravest cits, with a relaxing frown,
Let out their tripping girls to gather flowers.

Ah! surely it had been a lovely sight
To see them trooping, ere the sun was high,
Back to their frugal homes with garlands dight
Of Cowslips pale, in sweetness doom'd to die.

The ruddier daughters of the hamlet oft
With balls of Cowslips pelted one another,
Or heap'd the hay, so flowery, sweet, and soft,
With fragrant load some panting nymph to smother.

Maybe these frolics of the antique age
Were all too rude, meek lady-flower, for thee:
Methinks thy fittest doom, on holy page
Of book devout, to fade in sanctity;

Where pious woman oft is wont to read,
And seeing thy pale relics, stops to pray,
That, like the virgin daughter of the mead,
She may be sweet, and hallow'd in decay.

July 13, 1844.

THE CELANDINE AND THE DAISY.

I LOVE the flowers that Nature gives away
With such a careless bounty: some would deem
She thought them baubles, things of no esteem,
Mere idle followers of unthrifty May.
See in the lane, where geese and donkeys stray,
The golden flower, the countless Celandine:
Though long o'erlook'd, it needs no praise of mine,
For 'tis one mightier poet's joy and theme.
See how the Daisies whiten all yon lea!
A thing so dear to poet and to child,
That when we see it on neglected wild,
We prize old Nature's generosity.
The Celandine one mighty bard may prize;
The Daisy no bard can monopolise.

THE SNOWDROP.

YES, punctual to the time, thou 'rt here again,
As still thou art:—though frost or rain may vary,
And icicles blockade the rockbirds' aery,
Or sluggish snow lie heavy on the plain,
Yet thou, sweet child of hoary January,
Art here to harbinger the haggard train
Of vernal flowers, a duteous missionary.
Nor cold can blight, nor fog thy pureness stain.
Beneath the dripping eaves, or on the slope
Of cottage garden, whether mark'd or no,
Thy meek head bends in undistinguish'd row.
Blessings upon thee, gentle bud of hope!
And Nature bless the spot where thou dost grow—
Young life emerging from thy kindred snow!

THE GENTIANELLA.

Pretty stranger in our gardens,
We should beg thee thousand pardons,
Long forgotten, far too long,
Never mention'd yet in song.
Strange it is, that never ditty
Ever told thee thou wert pretty:
Rondo none, nor ritornella,
Praises thee, my Gentianella.
Very well I know thee, why
Thou art not like the cloudless sky,
Nor like the virgin's melting eye.
Poets seek in fields and trees
Quaint conceits and similes;
But thine azure is thine own,—
Nothing like it have I known;
Seems it not of upper earth:
Surely it must have its birth
In the darkness far below,
Where the dark-eyed sapphires grow?

52527

Lovely votary of the sun,
Never wishing to be won
By a vain and mortal lover,
Shrinking closely into cover
When thy true love hath departed,
Patient, pure, and simple-hearted.
Like an exile doom'd to roam,
Not in foreign land at home,—
I will call thy azure hue
Brightest, firmest, truest blue.

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY.

Some flowers there are that rear their heads on high,
The gorgeous products of a burning sky,
That rush upon the eye with garish bloom,
And make the senses drunk with high perfume.
Not such art thou, sweet Lily of the Vale,
So lovely, small, and delicately pale,—
We might believe, if such fond faith were ours,
As sees humanity in trees and flowers,
That thou wert once a maiden, meek and good,
That pined away beneath her native wood
For very fear of her own loveliness,
And died of love she never would confess.

May 24th, 1846.

THE DANDELION.

STRANGE plants we bring from lands where Caffirs roam,
And great the traveller in botanic fame
That can inflict his queer and ugly name
On product of South Afric sands or loam,
Or on the flexile creeper that hath clomb
Up the tall stems of Polynesian palms;
And now with clusters, or with spikes, embalms
The sickly air beneath the glassy dome
In lordly garden. Haply time may be
When botanist from fire-born Owhyhee
Shall bear thee, milky mother of white down,
Back to his isle, a golden gift superb;—
Give name uncouth to diuretic herb,
And from the Dandelion reap renown.

TO THE PLANT "EVERLASTING."

And is it thus? Shall roses fade,
And violets wither in the shade?
Must the tall lily lose her height,
And sickly pale usurp her white?
And shall the luscious woodbine shed
The quaint horns of each clustering head?
Must the sweet lady jessamine,
Pride of the cottar's porch, resign
The virgin pureness of her coronal,
And thou sustain no change at all?
The snowdrops, with their fairy bells,
Have but one chilly month of beauty;
Then the rank-set daffodils
Take the term of vernal duty:
And then in order due succeed
The cowslip, maiden of the mead,
And primrose of the "river's brim,"—
A village lassie, frank and free,
Unlike the cowslip, tall and slim—

A lady she of high degree,
Like a Roman bride in her bridal trim.
But these, and many more as gay,
As innocent and frail as they,
By Nature strewn in sweet disorder,
Or nicely prank'd in bed and border,
Babes of April, pets of May,
Like joys of childhood pass away.
Summer has a hotter grace,
Of darker leaf and broader face.
I never loved them much, and so
I 'm well content to let them go.
And yet they tarry, trying ever—
Vainly trying to be—what?
To be young in vain endeavour,—
Venerable they are not.
Never mind!—we see the stems
Of summer flowers, all bare and seedy,
Like princes, stript of diadems,
In garden plots hirsute and weedy.
And when green Autumn, matron sage,
A lady of a "certain age,"
Majestic trails her sinuous train,
And clothes the yellow fields with grain,
She hath attendance meek of flowers,

As bold and purple, ripe and rosy,
As dowagers right red and cosy:
Grave matrons in the fairy hospitals,
Staid, stately, formal, bearded seneschals;
The painted pageantry of fairy bowers;
The darlings of a region far away,
Late-flowering heaths of Southern Africa,
Fuchsias from Chili, dahlias from Peru,
And strange varieties of motley hue,
Or gorgeous tints, that show what art can do.
But Winter comes,—
They perish; let them go!
There still are flowers, whose ancestors were born
Beneath the southern reign of Capricorn,
That deck old Winter under glassy frames.
I love them not, and do not know their names.
I better like the lichen's crackly scale,
The velvet moss, or verdant fox's tail.
But thus it seems that Nature ranges
In perpetuity of changes;
For every age she hath a symbol,
And tells it what it ought to be;
Youth, like Spring-time, light and nimble,
Evanescent in its glee;

Middle age, like woman wedded,
Should be Summer altogether;—
Only mark, it is not needed
There should be any rainy weather.
Autumn beauties, such there are,
Of forty years, or rather more,
But not so delicately fair
As twenty years ago they were,
Yet rich and ripe as Autumn's store.
And Winter—no, I will not tell
How age is Winter's parallel.
If like it be in anything,
'Tis nearest to successive Spring.
Spring, Summer, Autumn, with their train,
Pass away and come again;
For every spray and every flower,
When sever'd from the natal stem,
May yield its fragrance for an hour
In coronary diadem:
But having done its best, it dies—
Its sweetest odours are its parting sighs.
But what art thou, that bear'st a name
Synonymous with poet's fame;
Thou yellow, husky, arid thing;
Thou mere antipathy to Spring;

Not sweet to smell, nor fair to sight,
And useless as an anchorite,
Who feasted on continual fasting,
Art *thou* indeed "the Everlasting?"
Yes, so indeed, 'tis ever so;
'Tis right that God should only show
His goodness for a little while.
Brief is the being of a smile,
And pity's tears are quickly dry,
And all good things are born to die;
While things unholy, of small worth,
Endure a weary time on earth.
But think not, therefore, that the good
Is but the Giver's fitful mood.
He only lets us have a taste
Of heavenly good, and then in haste
Withdraws it, that we may be led
To seek it at the fountain-head;
While for the earth he leaves a feint,
The idol of the permanent,—
A something very like, indeed,
But not the same; a worthless weed
That hath the form, but not the power,
The juice, or fragrance of a flower.

THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

THERE is a little and a pretty flower,
That you may find in many a garden plot;
Yet wild it is, and grows amid the stour
Of public roads, as in close-wattled bower:
Its name in English is, Forget-me-not.

Sweet was the fancy of those antique ages
That put a heart in every stirring leaf,
Writing deep morals upon Nature's pages,
Turning sweet flowers into deathless sages,
To calm our joy and sanctify our grief.

And gladly would I know the man or child,
But no!—it surely was a pensive girl
That gave so sweet a name to floweret wild,
A harmless innocent, and unbeguiled,
To whom a flower is precious as a pearl.

Fain would I know, and yet I can but guess,
How the blue floweret won a name so sweet.
Did some fond mother, bending down to bless
Her sailing son, with last and fond caress,
Give the small plant to guard him through the fleet?

Did a kind maid, that thought her lover all
By which a maid would fain belovèd be,
Leaning against a ruin'd abbey wall,
Make of the flower an am'rous coronal,
That still should breathe and whisper, "Think of me?"

But were I good and holy as a saint,
Or hermit dweller in secluded grot,
If e'er the soul in hope and love were faint,
Then, like an antidote to mortal taint,
I 'd give the pretty flower Forget-me-not.

SONNETS AND OTHER POEMS

REFERRING TO THE PERIOD OF

INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD.

The following Poems were, with scarcely an exception, addressed to individuals, or suggested by actual occurrences. They have, however, little or nothing of an occasional character.

CHILDHOOD.

Oh what a wilderness were this sad world
If man were always man, and never child;
If Nature gave no time, so sweetly wild,
When every thought is deftly crisped and curled,
Like fragrant hyacinth with dew impearled,
And every feeling in itself confiding,
Yet never single, but continuous, gliding
With wavy motion as, on wings unfurled,
A seraph clips Empyreal! Such man was
Ere sin had made him know himself too well.
No child was born ere that primeval loss.
What might have been, no living soul can tell:
But Heaven is kind, and therefore all possess
Once in their life fair Eden's simpleness.

TO AN INFANT.

WISE is the way of Nature, first to make
This tiny model of what is to be,
A thing that we may love as soon as see,
That seems as passive as a summer lake
When there is not a sigh of wind to shake
The aspen leaf upon the tall slim tree.
Yet who can tell, sweet infant mystery,
What thoughts in thee may now begin to wake?
Something already dost thou know of pain,
And, sinless, bear'st the penalty of sin;
And yet as quickly wilt thou smile again
After thy cries, as vanishes the stain
Of breath from steel. So may the peace within
In thy ripe season re-assert its reign.

TO AN INFANT.

SURE 'tis a holy and a healing thought
That fills my heart and mind at sight of thee,
Thou purest abstract of humanity.
Sweet infant, we might deem thy smile was brought
From some far distant Paradise, where nought
Forbad to hope whate'er of good may be,
Where thou could'st know, and feel, and trust, and see
That innocence which, lost, is vainly sought
In this poor world. Yet, if thou wert so good
As love conceives thee, thou hadst ne'er been born:
For sure the Lord of Justice never would
Have doomed a loyal spirit to be shorn
Of its immortal glories—never could
Exile perfection to an earth forlorn.

TO AN INFANT.

WRITTEN ON A SNOWY DAY.

Some say, sweet babe, thy mind is but a blank,
As white and vacant as the level field
Of unsunned snow, that passively must yield
To human foot, to vapour dull and dank,
To wheel indenting slow, with sullen clank,
To wanton tracery of urchin wild.
I deem not so of any human child,
Nor can believe our nature ever sank
To such a lowness. Nay, my pretty boy!
In thy shrill laugh there is intelligence;
And though we can but guess, or how, or whence
Thy soul was wafted—from what realm of joy
Or mere privation thou hast hither come,—
Thought has come with thee, happy thought, though dumb.

TO A DEAF AND DUMB LITTLE GIRL.

Like a loose island on the wide expanse,
Unconscious floating on the fickle sea,
Herself her all, she lives in privacy;
Her waking life as lovely as a trance,
Doomed to behold the universal dance,
And never hear the music which expounds
The solemn step, coy slide, the merry bounds,
The vague, mute language of the countenance.
In vain for her I smooth my antic rhyme;
She cannot hear it, all her little being
Concentred in her solitary seeing—
What can she know of beaut[eous] or sublime?
And yet methinks she looks so calm and good,
God must be with her in her solitude.

THE GOD-CHILD.

I stood beside thee in the holy place,
And saw the holy sprinkling on thy brow,
And was both bond and witness to the vow
Which own'd thy need, confirm'd thy claims of grace;
That sacred sign which time shall not efface
Declared thee His, to whom all angels bow,
Who bade the herald saints the rite allow
To the sole sinless of all Adam's race.
That was indeed an awful sight to see;
And oft, I fear, for what my love hath done,
As voucher of thy sweet communion
In thy [sweet] Saviour's blessed mystery.
Would I might give thee back, my little one,
But half the good that I have got from thee.

TWINS.

But born to die, they just had felt the air,
When God revoked the mandate of their doom.
A brief imprisonment within the womb,
Of human life was all but all their share.
Two whiter souls unstained with sin or care
Shall never blossom from the fertile tomb ;—
Twin flowers that wasted not on earth their bloom,
So quickly Heaven reclaimed the spotless pair.
Let man that on his own desert relies,
And deems himself the creditor of God,
Think how these babes have earned their paradise,
How small the work of their small period :
Their very cradle was the hopeful grave,
God only made them for His Christ to save.

BOYHOOD AND GIRLHOOD.

Did our first parents in their happy seat,
New from the Maker's hand, a wedded pair,
In livelier hues their several sex declare
Than that brave boy, and that wee lady sweet?
Though not in measure nor in mind complete
They come, a perfect husband and a bride;
Yet is the seal impressed and testified
By prophet Nature, till the season meet.
The girl, a girl instinct with simple arts,
And all the innocent cunning of her sex;
A very girl, delighting to perplex
The eye of love with antic change of parts:
Burly and bold the lad, his mien denotes
One-hearted manhood even in petticoats.

To K. H. I.

THE INFANT GRANDCHILD OF A BLIND GRANDFATHER.

Oh sweet new-comer to the changeful earth!
If, as some darkling seers have boldly guessed,
Thou hadst a being and a human birth,
And wert erewhile by human parents blest,
Long, long before thy present mother pressed
Thee, helpless stranger, to her fostering breast;
Then well it is for thee that thou canst not
Remember aught of face, or thing, or spot,
But all thy former life is clean forgot:
For sad it were to visit earth again,
And find it false, and turbulent, and vain;
So little better than it was of yore,
Yet nothing find that thou hast loved before;
And restless man in haste to banish thence
The very shadow of old reverence.
But well for us that there is something yet,
Which change cannot efface, nor time forget;—

The patient smile of passive babyhood,
The brook-like gurglings, murmuring after meaning,
The waking dream, the shade as softly screening
The innocent sweetness of the opening bud,
Which future love and sager thought encloses,
As dewy moss, that swathes the swelling roses,
Till thought peers forth, and murmurs break to words,
With human import in the notes of birds.
And thus sweet maid! thy voice, so blithe and clear,
Pours all the spring on thy good grandsire's ear,
Filling his kind heart with a new delight,
Which Homer may in ancient days have known,
Till love and joy create an inward sight,
And blindness shapes a fair world of its own.
Let mutability, then, work its will,
The child shall be the same sweet creature still.

Thou, Baby Innocence!—unseen of me,
New bursting leaflet of the eternal tree,
That thou art sweet, is all I know of thee.

I know thou must be innocent and fair,
And dimpled soft as other babies are;
But then—what impress doth thy image bear?

Which most prevails, the mother or the sire?
Are thine eyes like thy father's—made of fire,
Keen to discern, and dauntless to inquire?

Or, like thy mother's, meek as summer eve,
Gracious in answer, open to receive,
Types of a soul most potent to believe?

Is thy chin cleft as sunny side of peach?
And have thy lips their own peculiar speech,
And murmurs that can chide, caress, beseech?

Thy little hands are busy,—that I know;
Thy tiny feet are fidging to and fro;
But what 's the inner mood that stirs them so?

Not knowing what thou art, I deem it meet
To think thee whatsoe'er I think most sweet,—
A bud of promise—yet a babe complete.

FAIN would I dive to find my infant self
In the unfathomed ocean of the past;
I can but find a sun-burnt prattling elf,
A forward urchin of four years at least.

The prettiest speech—'tis in my mind engrained—
That first awaked me from my babyhood:
'Twas a grave saw affectionately feign'd—
"We 'll love you, little master,—if you 're good."

Sweet babe, thou art not yet or good or bad,
Yet God is round thee, in thee, and above thee;
We love, because we love thee, little lad,
And pray thou may'st be good—because we love thee.

ON AN INFANT'S HAND.

WHAT is an infant but a germ,
Prophetic of a distant term?
Whose present claim of love consists
In that great power that Nature twists
With the fine thread of imbecility,
Motion of infinite tranquillity.
Joy that is not for this or that,
Nor like the restless joy of gnat,
Or insect in the beam so rife,
Whose day of pleasure is its life;
But joy that by its quiet being
Is witness of a law foreseeing
All joy and sorrow that may hap
To the wee sleeper in the mother's lap.
Such joy, I ween, is ever creeping
On every nerve of baby sleeping;

But, baby waking, longest lingers
In tiny hand and tiny fingers,
[Like lamp beside sepulchral urn,
Much teaching that it ne'er did learn,
Revealing by felicity,
Foretelling by simplicity,
And preaching by its sudden cries,
Alone with God the baby lies.]
How hard it holds!—how tight the clasp!
Ah, how intense the infant grasp!
Electric from the ruling brains
The will descends and stirs and strains
That wondrous instrument, the hand,
By which we learn to understand,
How fair, how small, how white and pure,
Its own most perfect miniature.
The baby-hand that is so wee,
And yet is all it is to be;
Unweeting what it has to do,
Yet to its destined purpose true.
The fingers four, of varied length,
That join or vie their little strength;
The pigmy thumb, the onyx nail,
The violet vein so blue and pale;

The branchy lines where Gipsy eld
Had all the course of life beheld:
All, to its little finger's tip,
Of Nature's choicest workmanship.
Their task, their fate, we hardly guess,—
But, oh, may it be happiness!
Not always leisure, always play,
But worky-day and holy-day;
With holy Sabbath interspersed,
And not the busiest day the worst.
Not doomed, with needle or with pen,
To drudge for o'er-exacting men,
Nor any way to toil for lucre
At frown of he or she rebuker;
But still affectionate and free
Their never weary housewifery.
Blest lot be thine, my nestling dove,
Never to work except in love;
And God protect thy little hand
From task imposed by unbeloved command!

TO JEANNETTE, SIX WEEKS OLD.

Our birth and death alike are mysteries,
And thou, sweet babe, art a mysterious thing,
In mute simplicity of passive being,
A co-essential symbol of the life
Which God hath made a witness of himself;
The all of God which heathen wisdom knew,
And heathen ignorance so far mistook,
Seeking the substance in the duskiest shade;
Dusky and distant as the pillar'd cloud
That never nearer, never farther, taught
The chosen seed their journey o'er the wild,
But in the promised land was seen no more.
Dim is the brightest shadow of the Lord
That earth reflects: an infant's life might seem
A scarce distinguishable effluence—
An air-blown globule of the living ocean.
And yet, methinks, sweet babe! if I should kneel

And worship thee for thy meek innocence,
I less should err than Egypt's white-swathed priest,
Who bade the prostrate toiling race adore
The one great life incarnate in the bull,
Ibis, or cat, monkey or crocodile,—
More wisely sin than did the Persian sage,
Who held that God enshrined His Majesty
In the huge mass of the insensate sun,
That loves not when it warms.

Yes, baby dear!
In thee do we behold a symbol meet
For joyous love and reverential musing;
Symbol of all that God through Nature gives
To sight, and touch, imparted and revealed.
But more thou art for hope and holier love—
For self-assuring faith, thou art far more
Than any sweet and fair similitude
Which sense most exquisite could match with thee;
For hopeful love, that loving thy wee self,
Loves yet in thee a future nobler being,
A Christian maid, maybe a Christian mother;
For Faith, that in the utmost thou canst be
To mortal sight, though good thou wert, and holy
As that dear maiden—mother of her Lord,
Sees but a seed, a type unrealised,

Not what thou art or shalt be, though the prayer
Of parent's heart were answered full in thee,
But as all Christ's beloved shall behold
Each other in the clearness of His day,
When child and parent, husband, wife, the king
And lowly subject, scholar and untaught,
The babe that drew but once its breath on earth
And the grey chronicle of ninety years,
Shall meet together in one family,
Coëval children of the one great Sire.

TO THE SAME, ON HER FIRST BIRTHDAY.

'Tis right the joyous epoch of thy birth
Should be a sunshine holyday on earth;
All Nature keeps it: now the boisterous North
Holds his chill breath; the birds are peeping forth,
Sweet little things, but yet not half so sweet
As thou, sweet flow'ret of a year complete!
I would, my babe, that prayer of force divine,
Or dedicated task, or vow of mine
To be performed, or suffered, as of old
Sad saints endured, or errant champion bold
Achieved on Syrian plains or Alpine passes cold—
That any work more meet for solemn time,
More grave and arduous than the easy rhyme
Which now, my love, 'tis well enough I can
Make faster far than many a wiser man—
Could gain for thee the moment of a bliss,
Were it no longer than a raptured kiss,

Or spare thy little life the pelting pain
That soon is past, but comes too soon again.
But vain the vow—the very wish is vain.
The caverned saint's long life of martyrdom,
The knees that leave their dints on convent stone,
The breath that is but one perpetual groan,
Are useless all one pause of peace to win:
No pain of man can expiate a sin.
But wherefore dream of what I fain would do,
Or prate of pain beneath a sky so blue?
'Tis Spring with Nature—tender Spring with thee,
But the sere Autumn follows hard on me.
It may be, pretty babe, ere thou canst know
The man that loves thee, and be-rhymes thee so,
I may be gone, and never see thee more;
But yet I see thee on the farther shore,
Clad in thine infant robes of innocence,
Pure even as now, baptised from all offence,
A spirit mature—yet with no more to fear
Than the sweet infant of a single year

TO MARGARET, ON HER FIRST BIRTHDAY.

ONE year is past, with change and sorrow fraught,
Since first the little Margaret drew her breath,
And yet the fatal names of Sin and Death,
Her sad inheritance, she knoweth not.
That lore, by earth inevitably taught,
In the still world of spirits is untold;
'Tis not of Death or Sin that angels hold
Sweet converse with the slumb'ring infant's thought.
Merely she is with God, and God with her
And her meek ignorance. Guiltless of demur,
For her is faith a hope; her innocence
Is holiness: the bright-eyed crowing glee
That makes her leap her grandsire's face to see,
Is love unfeigned and willing reverence.

March 3rd, 1843.

N.B.—It was the opinion of certain ancient divines that when babies smile in sleep their guardian angels are whispering to them.

THE FOURTH BIRTHDAY.

Four years, long years, and full of strange event
To thee, sweet boy, though brief and bare to me,
Of thy young days make up the complement,
And far out-date thy little memory.

How many tears have dropp'd since thou wert born,
Some on the cradle, some upon the grave!
Yet having thee, thy father, not forlorn,
Felt he had something yet of God to crave.

For who hath aught to love, and loves aright,
Will never in the darkest strait despair;
For out of love exhales a living light,
A light that speaks—a light whose breath is prayer.

Sorrow hath been within thy dwelling, child,
Yet sorrow hath not touch'd thy delicate bloom;
So, the low floweret in Arabian wild
Grows in the sand, nor fades in the simoom.

What thou hast lost thou know'st not, canst not know,
Too young to wonder when thy elders moan;
Thou haply think'st that adult eyes can flow
With tears as quick and transient as thine own.

The swift adoption of an infant's love
Gives to thy heart all infant hearts require;
Unfelt by thee, the mortal shaft that clove
In twain thy duty, left thy love entire.

Ne'er be thy birthday as a day unblest,
Which thou or thine might wish had never been;
But in thine age, a quiet day of rest,
A sabbath, holy, thoughtful, and serene.

THE INFANT'S SOUL.

SWEET baby, little as thou art,
Thou art a human whole;
Thou hast a little human heart,
Thou hast a deathless soul.

Yet, being all that man can be,
There 's something yet behind;
Sweet angels in their ministry
Must yet build up the mind.

Soul! never say the soul is not
In thing that does not think;
No thought hast thou, sweet thing, I wot,
When thy thin eyelids wink.

The soul is life, the life that lives,
And shall exist for aye;
And buzzes 'mid the million hives
That swarm out every day.

In every man, in every babe,
Beneath the spacious cope,
Where eastern wight with astrolabe
Might take the horoscope.

TO DEAR LITTLE KATY HILL.

Oft have I conn'd, in merry mood or grave,
For many a babe a sad or merry stave,
In merry love of softly smiling baby,
Or love subdued by fear of what it may be.
But then all babies are so much alike,
'Twere easier far to single out a spike,
The fairest spike in all a field of barley;
Or mid the drops of dew that late or early
Shine to the rising or the setting sun,
To mark and memorise a single one;
In a long bank to find the violet
That is, or should be, Flora's own dear pet;
To stamp a signet on the sweetest note
That spins itself in Philomela's throat;
The very whitest spot of all to show
In a flat ocean of untainted snow;
The blackest spot of utter dark to tell,
Or do aught else which is impossible,

Than to explain to each expectant mother
How her sweet thing is sweeter than another.
So ancient fathers deemed, and wisely deemed,
Or, if not so, yet beautifully dreamed,
At the last day, the day of wrath and love,
The cherished nestlings of the mystic dove
Shall spring from earth and meet the promised skies
All in one shape, one feature, and one size,
Welcome alike before the Almighty throne,
Each in the Saviour's likeness, not its own,
Alike all blessed, and alike all fair,
And only God remember who they were.
Yet love on earth will always make or find
(They saw but ill who said that Love was blind)
In things most like a lovely difference,
Distinguish innocence from innocence.
And lynx-eyed Love, my little Catherine,
Perceives a *self* in that smooth brow of thine:
Thy small sweet mouth, with speechless meaning rife,
Moves hopes and smiles with something more than life:
The lucid whiteness of the flower-soft skin,
Transparent, shows a wakening soul within,
That ever and anon peeps through those eyes,
Soft as the tenderest light of vernal skies,

Blue as the shadow of the halcyon's breast,
On the calm waves herself has lulled to rest;
Informed with light, by turns revealed and hid
By gentle movement of the dewy lid:
E'en in the quivering of thy little hands
A spirit lives and almost understands.
Oh, may each omen of thy form and hue,
The lamb's pure white, the clear and hopeful blue,
The gracious blending of unbroken lines,
Which thy round shape continuously combines,
Portend the blended graces of a soul
Whose various virtues form a virtuous whole!

TO CHRISTABEL ROSE COLERIDGE.

NATURE and Fortune, and the doom severe
Of my own faults, forbid me to desire
The bliss of fathers seated by the fire;
Happy to know their darlings all are near,
Happy the crowing note of babe to hear,
Happy with lads that, restless to inquire,
Ask curious questions that might tease and tire
Aught less affectionate than parent's ear.
Yet though the name of uncle, in the mind
Of childhood, be with horrid deeds combined
Of bloody Richard, and that covetous man
That left the poor babes in the wildering wood,
I would be Uncle Toby if I could,
Or Oliver returned from Hindostan.
Sweet Christabel, that hath a lovely name
That would the sweetest thing commemorate
That ever poet dreamed, be not thy fate

Like hers, to tremble with a faultless shame!
Oh, may no act of thine provoke the blame
Which, least deserved, is ever keenest felt!
Thine innocent flesh, that softest touch can melt,
May never worldly thought or speech defame!
But in the world thou must be incomplete,
For who of Christabel can close the story?—
The name, sweet child, it is an omen meet
Of all that earth bestows of good and glory.
May'st thou for aye in love and fancy dwell
Like thy good grandsire's lovely Christabel!

PRIMITIÆ.

SWEET child! I write, because I fain would see
In thy unspotted book my jagged hand,
The rudest sketch and primal prophecy
Of what thy wit may win or sense command.

Some men would tell thee that thy soul is yet
An album, open for all men to write in.
I deem not so, for thou canst not forget
What most thou art, and what I most delight in.

Ere thou wert born "into this breathing world,"
God wrote some characters upon thy heart.
Oh, let them not like beads of dew impearl'd
On morning blades before the noon depart!

But morning drops before the noon exhale,
And yet those drops appear again at even;
So childish innocence on earth must fail,
Yet may return to usher thee to heaven.

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

THE Christian virtues, one, two, three,
Faith and Hope and Charity,
May all find exercise in thee.

In Faith, sweet infant that thou art,
Of God's sublime decrees a part,
Thy mother holds thee to her heart.

Hope is the joy of Faith. It were
Sad to behold a babe so fair
Without the hope that makes a joy of care.

Well 'twill be if we can learn,
If loving thee, babe, we discern
The love of God, and let it clearly burn.

The love which sanctifies desire
Is, like the bush, unhurt by fire,—
For which God grants what longing souls desire.

LINES,

WRITTEN IN A BIBLE PRESENTED BY THE AUTHOR TO HIS GODCHILD.

'Tis little I can give thee now,
And less that I shall leave;
Yet this small present, as I trow,
Is, in acquittance of my vow,
The very *best*
That could attest
My anxious love
For thee, sweet Dove,
The *best* thou canst receive.

MEDITATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE PIECES.

MEMORIAL POEMS.

WHY IS THERE WAR ON EARTH?

WRITTEN ON A CALM AND BEAUTIFUL DAY IN MAY, 1848.

WHY is there war on earth? Earth is most sweet
When all things are at peace, or only strive
How to make up the largest sum of joy.
'Tis now sweet Spring. Methinks 'twere wise to deem
Our longest life but a protracted Spring—
Hope's blossom swelling in the pregnant bud
Of mother Faith, that fosters by concealing,
And owes its beauteous vigour* to a root
Unseen below, like dark antiquity.

But there is war, because man craves the fruit
Of Autumn in the aye-beginning Spring.
We would have perfect freedom upon earth;—
Ah, fools! to think that freedom can consist
In selfish singleness of myriad wills,
Worse than the old Epicurean fancy

* Strength and beauty—*First Sketch.*

Of waving atoms hook'd into a world!
But madder yet to think that million wills,
Each crushing other, can compose one will,
Constituent of universal truth.
We would be free as nature, but forget
That Nature wears an universal* law,
Free only, for she cannot disobey. †

She hath no self to sacrifice: but man,
By sinning, made out of himself a self
Alien from God, that must be self-destroy'd
Ere man can know what freedom is, or feel
His spirit enfranchised,—general as the light
Diffused through ether in its purity,
And by the various sympathies of earth,
Blent and dissected into various hues
That all are light, as a good man's good works,
All, all are love.
Thank God, the times are pass'd
When fear and blindly-working ignorance
Could govern man. 'Tis Faith and duteous love

* Or, an everlasting.

† We would be the sons of Nature—would be free
As Nature is. But can we then forget
That Nature is an everlasting law,
And free because she cannot disobey?—*First Sketch.*

Out of a multitude must form a state.
We have escaped from Egypt; but we walk
Wall'd by the waters of a blood-red sea,
Parted perforce, impatient to o'erwhelm us,
Soon as we not believe the awful word,
That bids the tide of ruin now to flow.
Yet we are spared; but shall we long be spared
In sleep fool-hardy, or ingrate repining,
When all around, as from the serpent's tooth
By Cadmus sown, in the wild Theban fable,
Spring armed hosts, all mad for liberty,
And yet permitting nothing to be free,
Save naked power, unclad with reverend form,
Unsanctified by faith, by love unbalm'd.*

* We have escaped from Egypt; but we roam
In a bare wilderness, and we lack—
We lack, or heed not—the prophetic voice
Which Israel had, but would not always hear.
Hence from the corse of vanquish'd tyranny,
As from the serpent's teeth by Cadmus sown,
Spring armed hosts [ ] eager to be slaves,
Crying for liberty, but meaning nought
Saving naked power, unclad with reverend form,
Unsanctified by faith, by love unbalm'd.—*First Sketch.*

LINES

WRITTEN BY H. C. IN THE FLY-LEAF OF A COPY OF LUCRETIUS PRESENTED BY HIM TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

In the far north, for many a month unseen,
The blessed sun scarce lifts his worshipp'd head;
No hardy herb records where he hath been;
But pale cold snows, with dim abortive sheen,
Show like the winding-sheet of Nature dead.

Yet ofttimes there the boreal morning gleams,
Flickering and rustling through the long, long night;
So hid from truth, and its all-cheering beams,
The mind, benighted, dawns with gorgeous dreams,
Cold, restless, false, unprofitably bright.

If such delusion held thy earthly thought,
Lucretius, still thou wast a lofty mind;
For, spurning all that hopes and fears had taught,
Thy venturous reason, hopeless, fearless, sought
In its own pride its proper bliss to find.

Oh! was it fear of what might be in realms
  Of blank privation made thee seek the peace
That the dead faith affords?—fear that dishelms
The vessel of the soul, and quite o'erwhelms
  The spiritual life, that rather would surcease,

Or be an atom, motion, air, or flame,
  Whose essence perishes by change of form,
Than wander through the abyss without an aim,
Duty, or joy—to feel itself the same,
  Though naked, bodiless, weak, amid the storm?

LINES

SUGGESTED BY A CAST FROM AN ANCIENT STATUE OF THE INFANT HERCULES STRANGLING THE SERPENTS.

BEHOLD Art's triumph! Yea, but what is Art?
Is it the Iris sent from mind to heart?
Or a bright exhalation, raised, refined,
And organized with various hues of mind?
Nay, let the mind and heart, as nature meant,
Unite to work their Maker's great intent;
As light and heat, diffused by the same sun,
To sense are diverse, but in essence one.
The poet's craft in rosy breath transpires,
And the quick music of a thousand lyres,
That wake to ecstasy the slumbering air,
Dies into nought, or flits we know not where.
The patient sculptor views, from day to day,
An image that can never pass away;
With resolute faith, which nothing can surprise,
Beholds the type in true proportions rise:

His progress slow, and every touch as slight
As dawn encroaching on a summer night;
His purpose sure, for consummated beauty
To him is love, religion, law and duty.
Long ere our God vouchsafed himself to be
A baby God, a human Deity,
The vast prophetic impulse of the earth
Foretold, and shadow'd forth the mystic birth;
Nor all the art of sacerdotal lies,
Nor the world's state, could so incarnalise
The strong idea, but that men, set free
By pure imagination's liberty,
Conceived the fancy of a boy divine.
Some fables fashion'd a fierce God of wine,
Abortive issue of intense desire,
Begot by Thunder and brought forth by Fire.
Some milder spirits cull'd two twinkling lights
From the throng'd brilliance of their Grecian nights,
And gave them names, and deem'd them great to save
The wandering mariner on the weltering wave.
Some, wiser still, believed the sun on high
A deathless offspring of the empyreal sky,
A personal power that could all truths reveal,
Mighty to slay, and merciful to heal.

Some feign'd—and they came nearest to the truth—
A destined husband of eternal youth,
Born of a mortal mother, and, ere born,
Doom'd to the pilgrim's houseless lot forlorn,
To fight and conquer, a victorious slave,
Strong in subjection, by obedience brave.
Such thought possess'd the nameless artist's mind
When he the God, the baby God, design'd,
That perfect symbol of awaken'd will,
Matching its might against predestinate ill.
The serpent writhing round his lower part,
His infant arm defies to reach his heart.
One mighty act is all the wondrous boy,
Line, limb, and feature, all are strength and joy.
Yet half an hour ago that infant slept,
Smiled at his mother's breast, and haply wept:
And when his task is done, the serpent slain,
Soft in his cradle-shield may sleep again.

SUMMER RAIN.

THICK lay the dust, uncomfortably white,
In glaring mimicry of Arab sands.
The woods and mountains slept in hazy light;
The meadows look'd athirst and tawny tann'd;
The little rills had left their channels bare,
With scarce a pool to witness what they were;
And the shrunk river gleam'd 'mid oozy stones,
That stared like any famish'd giant's bones.

Sudden the hills grew black, and hot as stove
The air beneath; it was a toil to be.
There was a growling as of angry Jove,
Provoked by Juno's prying jealousy—
A flash—a crash—the firmament was split,
And down it came in drops—the smallest fit
To drown a bee in fox-glove bell conceal'd;
Joy fill'd the brook, and comfort cheer'd the field.

TO W. W.,

ON HIS SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY.

Happy the year, the month, that finds alive
A worthy man in health at seventy-five.
Were he a man no further known than loved,
And but for unremember'd deeds approved,
A gracious boon it were from God to earth
To leave that good man by his humble hearth.
But if the man be one whose virtuous youth,
Loving all Nature, was in love with truth;
And with the fervour of religious duty
Sought in all shapes the very form of beauty;—
Feeling the current of the tuneful strain,
Joy in his heart, and light upon his brain,
Knew that the gift was given, and not in vain;
Whose careful manhood never spared to prune
What the rash growth of youth put forth too soon;
Too wise to be ashamed to grow more wise;
Culling the truth from specious fallacies:—
Then may the world rejoice to find alive
So good, so great a man, at seventy-five.

WRITTEN AT BELLE-VUE, AMBLESIDE.

STILL is it there, the same soft quiet scene,
Which, whether sodden with importunate rain,
Or sprinkled with the yellow sun, that pours
Columnal brightness through the fissured clouds
Of autumn eve, or, e'en as now display'd,
In the full brightness of the argent moon,
Is yet the same, the same beloved scene,
Which neither time nor change shall wipe away
From the capacious memory of the soul.
Oh blessed faculty of inward sight,
Safe from disease and mortal accident
As love itself, secure from dull caprice
Of prohibition! Blind Mæonides,
That, wandering by the myriad-sounding sea,
Saw not his footsteps on the passive beach,
Nor saw, alas! the many beauteous eyes
That gleam'd with gladness at his potent song,
Had yet a world of beauty—verdant hills,
Bright with the infinite motion of their leaves;

Close-vested towers in olive-groves embower'd,
Whence the gold-cinctured dove for ever coo'd,
Wide-laughing ocean, rich with southern gleam
Purpureal, jewell'd with a hundred isles,
Or roused indignant from its slumberous depths
To smite the long-presumptuous rampart, piled
Without a prayer;—Achilles vast, reclined,
Listening afar the tumults of the field;—
Sweet Helen, sad amidst her loveliness,
Taming her once glad motions to the halt
Of Priam, leaning on her rounded arm;—
Pelides, glittering like an evil star;—
Or love-struck Hecuba, when first she wept
O'er the new-ransom'd carcase of her best,
Her fate-devoted Hector.

So, if HE
Who in his judgments is for ever good,
Should make the brightest noon a night to me,
Yet will those fields, those lowly heaving hills,
That roving river, that pure inland lake,
And those neat dwellings that assure my heart
That not alone I love and linger here,
Abide the heir-looms of my inner life,
As sweet, as vivid to my happier dreams,
As when through tears I saw *her* snatch'd away.

NAWORTH.

WHEN English lords and Scottish chiefs were foes,
Stern on the angry confines Naworth rose;
In dark woods islanded its towers look'd forth,
And frown'd defiance to the growling North;
With donjon-keep and long embattled wall,
Portcullis, portal, and wide-echoing hall,
Where erst the warrior carved in gloves of steel,
And the stone pavement clang'd with iron heel.
The very type was Naworth of a time
Whose sins and woes by age are made sublime.
There came the vagrant minstrel—not in vain,
For ladies loved, and lords repaid his strain.
What though his song was oft of loves unholy,
And fights,—fantastic brood of restless folly?
What though the plaudits, clatter'd on the stones,
Bemock'd and deafen'd the poor captive's groans,
Doom'd in sad durance pining to abide
The long delay of hope from Solway's further side?

Let us in thankfulness our God adore,
Because such things have been, and are no more:
Nor let a Queen, a matron pure and young,
And sweet as e'er by vagrant bard was sung,
Conspire with those who would, with eyeless rage,
Deface the relics of ancestral age;
But, as her duty, be it still her joy
All to improve, and nothing to destroy.
So Naworth stands, still rugged as of old,
Arm'd like a knight without, austerely bold;
But all within bespeaks the better day,
And the bland influence of a Morpeth's sway.

LINES.

Oh for a man, I care not what he be,
A lord or labourer, so his soul be free,
Who had one spark of that celestial fire
That did the Prophets of old time inspire,
When Joel made the mystic trumpet cry,
When Jeremiah raised his voice on high,
And rapt Isaiah felt his great heart swell
With all the sins and woes of Israel!
Not such am I,—a petty man of rhyme,
Nursed in the softness of a female time.
From May of life to Autumn have I trod
The earth, not quite unconscious of my God;
But apter far to recognise his power
In sweet perfection of a pencill'd flower,
A kitten's gambols, or a birdie's nest,
A baby sleeping on its mother's breast,
Than in the fearful passages of life,—
The battle-field, the never-ceasing strife

Of policy that ever would be wise,
Dissecting truth into convenient lies;
The gallows, or the press-gang, or the press;
The poor man's pittance, ever less and less;
The dread magnificence of ancient crime,
Or the mean mischief of the present time.
Yet there is something in my heart that would
Become a witness to eternal good.
Woe to the man that wastes his wealth of mind,
And leaves no legacy to human kind!
I love my country well,—I love the hills,
I love the valleys and the vocal rills;
But most I love the men, the maids, the wives,
The myriad multitude of human lives.

HIDDEN MUSIC.

THERE came a stream of music on my ear
From the dark centre of an aged wood,
Now muffled deep, and now ecstatic clear,
Bright as a prophecy of coming good.

I knew not, and I did not care to know,
What voice or what mechanic instrument
Utter'd the sounds, whose never-ending flow
[Contain'd] my soul in such sublime content.

'Twas no small, light, and self-repeating air,
The close we guess before 'tis well begun;
'Twas the united voice of everywhere,
Past, present, future, all in unison.

It was a strain might usher in the birth
Of human life, and soothe its earliest cry,
And sound the last farewell to mother earth,
When souls for heaven mature are glad to fly.

All elements of sound, and all the wealth
Of music's universal speech was there,
And ever and anon the wily stealth
Of Love was murmuring in the fitful air.

I HAVE WRITTEN MY NAME ON WATER.

THE PROPOSED INSCRIPTION ON THE TOMB OF JOHN KEATS.

And if thou hast, where could'st thou write it better
Than on the feeder of all lives that live?
The tide, the stream, will bear away the letter,
And all that formal is and fugitive:
Still shall thy Genius be a vital power,
Feeding the root of many a beauteous flower.

ON A PICTURE OF A VERY YOUNG NUN,

NOT READING A DEVOTIONAL BOOK, AND *NOT* CONTEMPLATING A CRUCIFIX PLACED BESIDE HER.

So young, too young, consign'd to cloistral shade,
Untimely wedded,—wedded, yet a maid;
And hast thou left no thought, no wish behind,
No sweet employment for the wandering wind,
Who would be proud to waft a sigh from thee,
Sweeter than aught he steals in Araby?
Thou wert immured, poor maiden, as I guess,
In the blank childhood of thy simpleness;
Too young to doubt, too pure to be ashamed,
Thou gavest to God what God had never claim'd,
And didst unweeting sign away thine all
Of earthly good,—a guiltless prodigal.
The large reversion of thine unborn love
Was sold to purchase an estate above.
Yet by thy hands, upon thy bosom prest,
I think, indeed, thou art not quite at rest;
That Christ that hangs upon the sculptured cross
Is not the Jesus to redeem thy loss;

Nor will that book, whate'er its page contain,
Convince thee that the world is false and vain.
E'en now there is a something at thy heart
That would be off, but may not, dare not, start;
Yes, yes! thy face, thine eyes, thy closed lips, prove
Thou wert intended to be loved and love.
Poor maiden! victim of the vilest craft
At which e'er Moloch grinn'd or Belial laugh'd,
May all thy aimless wishes be forgiven,
And all thy sighs be register'd in Heaven,
And God his mercy and his love impart
To what thou should'st have been, and what thou art!

BEAUTY.

Oh! why is beauty still a bud unfolding,
A greater beauty that can never be,
Yet always is its faint fair self beholding,
In all of fair and good that man may see?

Nay, beauty is with thee the power of life,
The germ and sweet idea of thy being;
As beauty fashion'd that first maid and wife,
That made primeval man rejoice in seeing.

He dream'd of beauty, and he wish'd to see
A form to be the substance of his dream;
So want begot a child of vacancy,
And that now is which did before but seem.

Adam did love before he look'd on Eve;
He found himself unblest in Eden's bower.
A love there is that does not yet conceive
Its own existence: 'tis a simple power,—

A power that most does recognise its might
In weakness, want, and everlasting yearning;
Whose heaven is soaring, seeking, endless flight,
Whose hell is thirst and everlasting burning.

For what is hell, but an eternal thirst,
And burning for the bounty once rejected?
And what is heaven, but God on earth rehearsed,
In the calm centre of the Lord perfected?

Then ask not why is beauty but a bud,
That never more than half itself discloses;
Sweet flower, like thee is every human good,
And love divine is seen in unblown roses.

FAIRY LAND.

Yes, I am old, and older yet must be.
Drifting along the everlasting sea;
And yet, through puzzling light and perilous dark,
I bear with me, as in a lonely ark,
A precious cargo of dear memory;
For, though I never was a citizen,
Enroll'd in Faith's municipality,
And ne'er believed the phantom of the few
To be a tangible reality,
Yet I have loved sweet things, that are not now,
In frosty starlight, or the cold moonbeam.
I never thought they were; and therefore now
No doubt obscures the memory of my dream.
My Fairy Land was never upon earth,
Nor in the heaven to which I hoped to go;
For it was always by the glimmering hearth,
When the last fagot gave its reddest glow,
And voice of eld wax'd tremulous and low,
And the sole taper's intermittent light,
Like a slow-tolling bell, declared good night.
Then could I think of Peri and of Fay,

As if their deeds were things of yesterday.
I felt the wee maid in her scarlet hood
Real as the babes that wander'd in the wood,
And could as well believe a wolf could talk
As that a man beside the babes could stalk,
With gloomy thoughts of murder in his brain;
And then I thought how long the lovely twain
Threaded the paths that wound among the trees,
And how at last they sunk upon their knees,
And said their little prayers, as prettily
As e'er they said them at their mother's knee,
And went to sleep. I deem'd them still asleep
Clasp'd in each other's arms, beside a heap
Of fragrant leaves;—so little then knew I
Of bare-bone Famine's ghastly misery.
Yet I could weep and cry, and sob amain,
Because they never were to wake again;
But if 'twas said, "They 'll wake at the last day!"
Then all the vision melted quite away;
As from the steel the passing stain of breath,
So quickly parts the fancy from the faith.
And I thought the dear babes in the wood no more true
Than Red Riding Hood,—aye, or the grim loup-garou,
That the poor little maid for her granny mistook;
I knew they were both only tales in a book.

THE ROYAL MAID.

Oh, thou sweet daughter and last lingering flower
Of a great nation's loyal hope and love,
Last of a line of kings whose royal dower
Is virgin loveliness sublimed to power,
The yearning blossom of the expectant dove
On the strong eagle's spacious wings upborne;
Or shall I call thee prophecy of spring,
In thine own virgin pureness blossoming,
Like the white May-bloom on the naked thorn;
Nay, rather art thou like a flower
Crowning some high crazy tower,
So sweetly smiling on the rifted wall,
That, for thy sake, we would not see it fall.
Oh, royal maid, excuse the idle brain
That, knowing thee but in thy loved ideal,
Plays with thine image, and would very fain
Love and revere thee too as something real;
The human accents of thine innocent thought
Would rather think thee flower, or happy bird,
Than the dull lesson that thou hast been taught;

Rather would deem thee bird, that glad and free
Warbles its wood-notes wild on greenwood tree,
Than tutor'd captive of a gilded cage,
Unweeting echo of a *prating* age.
Alas! a prisoner born, and bred a slave,
But late awaken'd from a happy trance,
Reft of the best of what thy fortune gave,
Thy childish, aimless, wantless ignorance:—
Ah, what a hopeless task it is for thee
To govern free men that were never free.
Easy it were, I doubt not, to obey,
If to obey were duty's consummation;
But throned servility, compell'd to sway
A shackled sceptre by the year and day—

* * * * *

ON THE DEATH OF HENRY NELSON COLERIDGE.

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND.

GREAT joy was mine to hear a second hope,
Another little maid, was born to thee,
On whom your elder darling needs must look
With some surprise, as on a legacy
From some old miser uncle never seen.
And when I learned that, on the self-same day
That gave that pure ideal of new life,
A softly-breathing infant, to the air,
The vow confirmed had made among thy kindred
A serious matron of a maiden gay,
I did design a furious gush of song,
A merry multiplicity of rhymes,
Where little sense were needed, save the sense,
That one delight is in a score of souls.
But death had struck me; God had called away
One whom the world, and I among the world,
Had augured to an honest course of glory;
Whose earliest youth was crowned with laureate wreath
On the proud banks of Isis and of Cam;

Eton's prime scholar, and the youth adroit
To turn the nicest phrases of the Greeks,
The very quintessence of Roman speech,
To modern meanings and to modish arts,
Which neither Greek nor Roman ever knew.
Vain knowledge this, unprofitable skill,
So may you think, and truly would you say,
But that the mind thus curiously trained
In the pure beauty of Hellenic art,
And grandeur elegant of gorgeous Rome,
Becomes to beauty feelingly awake,
Nice to perceive, glad to believe and love
Whate'er of beautiful abides in forms,
Hues, sounds, emotions of the moral heart,
Feeling a universal harmony
Of all good things seen, or surpassing sense,
And for the love of all that lovely is,
And for a dauntless spirit unsubdued
By a too general lack of sympathy
Fighting for truth. My sister loved him well!
She was a maid—alas! a widow now—
Not easily beguiled by loving words,
Nor quick to love; but, when she loved, the fate
Of her affection was a stern religion,
Admitting nought less holy than itself.

Seven years of patience, and a late consent
Won for the pair their all of hope. I saw
My sweetest sister in her honeymoon,
And then she was so pensive and so meek
That now I know there was an angel with her
That cried, Beware!
But he is gone, and all
The fondest passages of wedded life
And mutual fondling of their progeny,
And hopes together felt, and prayers when both
Blended their precious incenses, and the wish
That they together might behold the growth
And early fruit, most holy and approved,
Of their two darlings, sinks in viewless night
And is no more.
Thus ever in this world are joy and woe;
The one before, the other hurrying after,
And "cadent tears" are ever prone to flow
In the quaint channels that are made by laughter.

Jan. 28, 1843.

AGNES.

In an old house, a country dwelling, nigh
A river, chafed by many a wave-worn stone,
A good man kept old hospitality,
With a warm purse well filled by industry
And prosperous dealings in the torrid zone.

His spouse was comely, stricken well in years;
His daughters' faces lighted all the house,
And they had tongues as well as eyes and ears.
But one there was, the youngest of the dears,
A child sedate, as still as any mouse.

Still as a little timid mouse she sat;
And yet her stillness seemed not to be fear,
Like mouse's hiding from the whisker'd cat.
Oh no! whate'er the subject of our chat,
She seemed to drink it in with eye and ear.

I cannot say she had a speaking eye,
For when my eye with hers would fain converse,
She would begin her needle's task to ply,
Stirring her little fingers busily;
And, wanting work, the kitten would she nurse.

Soon as she could, she unobserved withdrew,
Determined of my purpose to defeat me.
And yet I loved her, as I always do
All pretty maids that are too young to woo,
However scurvily they choose to treat me.

Years have gone by, her worthy father dead,
And she could deem herself a child no longer.
Who can conceive what thoughts in her were bred,
When she beheld her elder sisters wed,
And womanhood in her grew daily stronger?

Or did she feel a warning in her heart,
An inward clock, that timely struck eleven,
And said, sweet Agnes, tender as thou art,
One hour is thine; be ready to depart;
Thy spouse affianced waits for thee in heaven?

I cannot tell, for I was far away,
By what slow course of gracious discipline,
Through gradual shades of unperceived decay,
As moonlight steals on fading summer day,
Her spiritual eye was trained to light divine.

But yet I trust she never knew the woe
Of body's waste, that brings despair and dearth
Unto the soul; that living death, so slow,
That leaves to those that would yet would not go,
No love of heaven, but weary hate of earth.

Nay, better, loving dearly to the last
All that she ever loved, with fond delay
The latest hour before her spirit past,
Prayed yet, though feeling that her lot was cast,
Like Jesus, that the cup might pass away.

FAREWELL!

HATH the vast ocean, that strange, humorous thing,
In all its depths or perilous banks a shell
That hath matured a pearl; let Ocean bring
That pearl to thee, and like some gentle spell
Which never witch or wicked wizard muttered,
But still hath dwelt in angel heart unuttered—
Mark on the pearl the sad, sweet word, farewell!

Hath the dead earth, dead now, but once alive
In every atom,—every pore and cell
Relics of life, or fated gems that strive
To be their proper selves, and pant and swell
Towards Light, the universal mediator,
And daily witness of the one Being greater,
Hath it aught sadder, sweeter, than farewell!

And hath the air—the always gracious air—
That ever fleeting yet would gladly dwell

For ever in the lowly voice of prayer—
Full loth, I ween, when ruder sounds compel
Its passive nature to unwilling madness;—
Hath air a joy so meek, so sweet a sadness,
As when she murmurs in a last farewell!

TO A FRIEND

SUFFERING UNDER A RECENT BEREAVEMENT.

THINK not, my friend, my heart or hand are cold
Because I do not, and I cannot weep.
Too sudden was the knowledge of the woe,
And it requires some time, some thoughtful pause,
Ere we believe what but too well we know.
Some men are lessoned long in sorrow's school,
And serve a long apprenticeship to grief,
So, when the ill day comes, their minds are clad
In funeral garments. Death came here at once,
Like the sun's setting in the level sea;
No meek, pale warning, melancholy eve,
Weaned the fond eyesight from the joyous day;
'Twas full-orbed day, and then 'twas total night—
Sad night for us, but better day for her.
Well may'st thou mourn, but mourn not without hope:
Thou art not one, I know, that can believe
A pausing pulse, an intermitted breath,
Or aught that can to mortal flesh befal,

Can turn to nothing any way of God,
Or frustrate one good purpose of our Lord.
She was a purpose of the great Creator,
Begun on earth, and well on earth pursued,
Now in the heaven of heavens consummate,
Or happy waiting the predestined day,
The flower and glory of her consummation.

A SCHOOLFELLOW'S TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THE REV. OWEN LLOYD.

I.

I was a comrade of his childish days,
And then he was to me a little boy,
My junior much, a child of winning ways,
His every moment was a throb of joy.

Fine wit he had, and knew not it was wit,
And native thoughts before he dreamed of thinking;
Odd sayings, too, for each occasion fit,
To oldest sights the newest fancies linking.

And his the hunter's bounding strength of spirit,
The fisher's patient craft, and quick delight
To watch his line, to see a small fish near it;
A nibble—ah! what ecstasy!—a bite.

Years glided on, a week was then a year,
Fools only say that happy hours are short;
Time lingers long on moments that are dear,
Long is the summer holiday of sport.

But then our days were each a perfect round;
Our farthest bourne of hope and fear, to-day;
Each morn to night appeared the utmost bound,
And let the morrow—be whate'er it may.

But on the morrow he is in the cliff—
He hangs midway the falcon's nest to plunder;
Behold him sticking, like an ivy leaf,
To the tall rock—he cares not what is under.

II.

I traced with him the narrow winding path
Which he pursued when upland was his way;
And then I wondered what stern hand of wrath
Had smitten him that wont to be so gay!

Then would he tell me of a woful weight—
A weight laid on him by a bishop's hand,
That late and early, early still and late,
He could not bear, and yet could not withstand.

Of holy thoughts he spake, and purpose high,
Dead in his heart, and yet like spectres stirring;
Of Hope that could not either live or die,
And Faith confused with self-abhorred demurring.

How beautiful the feet that from afar
Bring happy tidings of eternal good:
Then kiss the feet that so bewildered are;
They cannot farther go where fain they would.

III.

I saw his coffin—'twas enough I saw
That he was gone—that his deep wound was healed;
No more he struggles betwixt faith and law,
The fulness of his bliss is now revealed:

He rests in peace; in Langdale's peaceful vale
He sleeps secure beneath the grassy sod;
Ah, no! he doth not—he hath heard "All hail
"Thou faithful servant," from the throne of God!

TO THE MEMORY OF JAMES GREENWOOD.

I.

Oh, Death! thou art indeed an awful thing
Did we believe in all we ought to know;
Yet ever brooding, thine invisible wing
Casts not a shadow in the vale below.

With vernal thyme the turfy hillocks swell,
Old Fairfield's side is sweet with fragrant larches,
And the slim lady birch he loved so well
With paly verdure decks her graceful arches.

The lovely things to which he gave a soul,
Till they became a body to his mind,
Are what they were before the booming toll
Declared his corse to hallow'd earth consign'd.

Yet in one house, that stands upon the brow,
One thought of death and of the dead is all;
Their depth of grief is all their comfort now,
They pray to God to help their tears to fall.

II.

He whom they miss, he was not of this land,
No grey-coat shepherd of the hill or plain;
For he was born where the tall chimneys stand,
And the hot wheels are whirring still for gain.

And yet as well he loved the mountain height
As he himself had been a mountain boy,
As well he loved the croft with daisies dight
As one that never knew a fiercer joy.

Sure thou hast seen, whoever thou may'st be,
If thou hast ever seen a London square,
A pining thing that ought to be a tree,
And would be so if not imprison'd there.

And haply thought how beautiful and large
The limbs and leaves of that imprison'd thing
Had been, if planted by the emerald marge
Of dripping well to shade the grateful spring.

'Twas so with him: in office close and dun
Full soon he learn'd the needful lore of trade;
Skill'd to compute how much the bargain won,
And ponder hard if more might have been made.

But not the spirit of the world which grew
Still more and more beyond the state's control,
Could quench his thirst of beauty or subdue
The love of Nature which possess'd his soul.

So he became a dweller of the hills,
And learned to love the village ways so well,
He prized the stream that turned the wealthiest mills
Less than the syke that trickles down the fell.

III.

Sad doth it seem, but nought is truly sad,
Or only sad that we may better be;
We should in very gulphs of grief be glad,
The great intents of God could we but see.

Think of the souls that he in heaven will meet,
Some that on earth he knew and loved most dearly;
And whose perfection at their Saviour's feet,
Without a stain of earth, will shine so clearly.

Think, too, of souls on earth unknown to him,
Whom he will know as well as kin or neighbours—
Laborious saints, that now with seraphim
Expect the blessed fruit of all their labours.

Think that he is what oft he wished to be
While yet he was a mortal man on earth;
Then weep, but know that grief's extremity
Contains a hope which never was in mirth.

June, 1845.

TO A LADY,

ON THE DEATH OF HER MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

SARA,—so let me call thee, since that name
Is most familiar to thy *friendly* ear,
And for a mother that is now no more,
And for a sister passing dear to me—
Long time it seems since thou and I have spoke
In verse or honest prose, or, happier still,
With running comment of looks, lips, and eyes,
And silence, when our mutual thought was heard,
Discoursed by mute and secret sympathy,
Interpreted by some half-melting star,
That seemed a part of twilight, or akin
To the retiring, pensive, tawny hill,
So dim reflected in the dozing lake,
It wot not of its presence;—lake once proud
Of diamonds dripping from thy silvery oar,
When thou, thy boat, and its long-beaded wake,
Seem'd like the shadow of a Glendoveer,
Floating above in smallest skiff of heaven,—

So shy, he would and yet would not be seen.
Those times are past,—and I have known thee tamed
To sober womanhood and matron grave,
Yet like the ever-glad Hesperian tree,
Whose summer fruitage gleams through vernal flowers;
And I have seen thee, too, in double grief
For two pure souls removed, so like each other,
They may be playmates in the bowers of bliss,—
For souls like theirs receive no taint of time.
And who can doubt that each fine faculty,
But half-developed in the prophet spring
Of thy sweet Katherine's little life, shall bloom
In God's own light, consummate and fulfilled?

* * * * *

ON THE DEATH OF THOMAS JACKSON,

LATE OF LOW WOOD INN, WHO DIED BY A FALL FROM AN APPLE TREE.

THERE is the lake and there the quiet hills,
A casual passer would observe no change;
Nor sign would see of widow's grief that kills
Even Nature's joy, and makes old beauty strange.

The last time I beheld thee, lovely lake,
Thou wert composed in that expectant calm,
Which any sigh of love-sick maid might shake,
Or dying close of penitential psalm.

I thought of Death. Who doth not think of Death?
And felt how sweet a boon that death might be,
Were it indeed a calm to feel the breath
Whene'er it came of stirring Deity.

I thought of Death. But did not think how near
That awful sound to its most awful meaning;
The babe that feels its mother's breast so near,
Slumbers and sucks and never dreams of weaning.

And even so we thought his honest face
Would ever greet us when we came again;
It seemed a natural product of the place,
Warmed by the sun and freshened by the rain.

But he is gone, the form we long have seen,
The vivid image that we bore away,
Is now a shadow of what once hath been,
The spectre of a body in decay.

The lake is there, the hills their distance keep,
The tall trees stand as if they mourned for ever,
But leave the widowed house alone to weep,
Nor seek the widowed heart from grief to sever.

For he is gone that was to us a smile,
An honest face to welcome when he came;
Short was the time, but yet a weary while
When Death was struggling with the shattered frame.

And many thoughts he had, as may be guessed,
And shows of earth that with the vision blended;
Shows that at times perplexed, but later blessed
The spirit equipped just ere the strife was ended.

Perhaps the latest object to employ
His parting thought upon the death-bed pillow,
Was the dear image of his orphan boy,
With small foot challenging the frisky billow.

Whatever sight or sound possessed him last,
Whatever sound of nature tolled his knell,
Gentle the sounds and fair the forms that past
Before his closing eye, and all was well.

Yes, all was well, for 'twas the will of Him,
Who knows both when to sow and when to reap;
And now amid the smiling cherubim,
Beholds the tears of them he bad to weep.

False is the creed, because the heart is dead,
That blames the widow's or the orphan's tear;
Eyes that beheld the Lord full oft were red
With human sorrow while they tarried here.

Mourn, for 'tis good for all of us to mourn,
In this dark valley where our way we grope;
Our very sorrow proves us not forlorn;
We mourn, but not as mourners without hope.

The lake is still the same, the changeful skies
Change by a Law that we may not control,
Sage Nature is not bound to sympathise
With every passion of a single soul.

Look not for sorrow in the changeful skies,
The mountain many-hued, or passive lake,
But look to Him, who sometimes will chastise
Those whom he loves, but never will forsake.

ON THE LATE DR. ARNOLD.

—•—

Spirit of the Dead!
Though the pure faith of Him that was on earth
Thy subject and thy Lord forbids a prayer—
Forbids me to invoke thee as of yore:—
(Weak souls, that dared not meet their God alone,
Sought countenance and kind companionship
Of some particular saint, whose knees had grazed
The very rock on which they knelt, whose blood
Had made or sanctified the gushing well,*
Round which their fond, mistaken piety
Had built a quaint confine of sculptured stone:—)
Yet may I hope that wheresoe'er he is,
Beneath the altar, by the great white throne,
In Abraham's bosom, or amid the deep
Of Godhead, blended with eternal light,
One ray may reach him from the humble heart
That thanks our God for all that he has been.

* Many of the holy wells are said to have sprung from the blood of Martyrs: for example, St. Winifred's in Wales.

What he is now we know not: he will be
A beautiful likeness of the God that gave
Him work to do, which he did do so well.
Whom Jesus loves, to them he gives the grace
For Him to do and suffer *in* the world;
To suffer *for* the world was His alone.
But he in whom we joyed—for whom we mourn—
Did he not suffer? Worldly men say, No!
Of ills which they call ill he had not many;
The poverty which makes the very poor
Begrudge a morsel to their very child,
Was never his; nor did he "pine in thought,"
Seeing the lady of his love possessed
By a much richer and no better man.
To him the lady of his love was wed,
Soon as his manhood authorised a wife;
And though the mother of his many babes,
To him she still was young, and fair, and fresh,
As when the golden ring slipp'd from his hand
Upon her virgin finger.

Yet he suffered
Such pains and throes as only good men feel:
For he assumed the task to rear the boy,
The bold, proud boy unto a Christian man.
'Twas not with childhood that he had to do,

Its wayward moods and ready penitence,
That still is prompt to kiss, if not the rod,
At least the hand that wields it; not to watch
Sweet instinct reaching after distant reason,
And mere affection trained to duteous love
(Though such the solace of his happy home,
Else how had he the hard behest endured?)—
Nor was it all—oh, bliss! if it had been—
To teach the young capacious intellect [doomed
How beauteous Greece and Rome, the child* fore-
To catch the sceptre from its parent, spake,
Fitting high thoughts with words, and words with deeds.
'Twas his to struggle with that perilous age
Which claims for manhood's vice the privilege
Of boyhood;—when young Dionysus† seems
All glorious as he burst upon the East,
A jocund and a welcome conqueror;

* "Rome, the child," &c. Alluding to the heathen prophecy, that Metis, Thetis, &c., were destined to produce a child more potent than his sire, which gave Jupiter so much alarm.

† Dionysus, Aphrodite—Bacchus, Venus. But the Greek divinities were not originally identical with the Roman idols, by whose names they are generally called. Dionysus, or Bacchus, was in all probability an Indian type of the sun, or rather of the great productive energy of the Universe, said to be the youngest of the gods, because his worship was last introduced into Greece. There can be no doubt that the Greeks blended the traditions of their local heroes with the astronomical mythology derived from Egypt and Phœnicia, of which the earliest form survives in India, especially among the wide-spreading Boodhists.

And Aphrodite, sweet as from the sea
She rose and floated in her pearly shell,
A laughing girl;—when lawless will erects
Honour's gay temple on the mount of God,
And meek obedience bears the coward's brand;
While Satan, in celestial panoply,
With Sin, his lady, smiling by his side,
Defies all heaven to arms! 'Twas his to teach,
Day after day, from pulpit and from desk,
That the most childish sin which man can do
Is yet a sin which Jesus never did
When Jesus was a child, and yet a sin
For which, in lowly pain, He lived and died:
That for the bravest sin that e'er was praised
The King Eternal wore the crown of thorns.
In him was Jesus crucified again;
For every sin which he could not prevent
Stuck in him like a nail. His heart bled for it
As it had been a foul sin of his own.
Heavy his cross, and stoutly did he bear it,
Even to the foot of holy Calvary;
And if at last he sunk beneath the weight,
There were not wanting souls whom he had taught
The way to Paradise, that, in white robes,
Thronged to the gate to hail their shepherd home!

EPITAPH ON OWEN LLOYD.

Could love devout, or longing sighs, or tears,
From God obtain a grant of lengthened years,
Then, wandering reader, thou hadst never stood
Beside the grave of one so young and good.
Still in the small but consecrated place
He spake of judgment and he spake of grace;
Of judgment dread, and merciful delay:
And latest spake of that, the latest day,
When those,—how few!—that may compare with him,
Shall mount on high with brightest seraphim!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS,

CHIEFLY LYRICAL.

PLAYFUL AND HUMOROUS PIECES.

THE BLIND MAN'S ADDRESS TO HIS LOVE.

THERE is a beauty in the mind,
That makes thee fair to me,
Sweet Mary Anne, though I am blind,
And blind I still must be.

I sit in darkness; but I know
If thou to me art near,
Through all my limbs I feel a glow,
A sudden gush of cheer.

Put thy least finger's smallest tip
Upon my wildest hair,
Each vein and nerve in me will skip,—
I know that thou art there.

They tell me thou art fair to see,
And of thy waist so trim;
I know thou art straight as poplar tree,
And delicately slim.

They tell me that thine eyes are black,
As black as burning coal:
I look, but find my eye-balls lack
The light that 's in my soul.

Thy hand is very soft I know—
They tell me it is white;
But it is not like the falling snow,
Because it does not bite.

For cold and biting are the flakes,
The melting flakes of snow,
When the blinding snow-storm overtakes
The blind men as they go.

But thy hand is soft, it melts away,
And then I hear thee speak;
And ever thy words are blithe and gay.
But thy voice is smooth as thy cheek.

So well I love the thought I have,
I do not wish to see;
I will live on in my darksome cave,
So thou wilt live with me.

SONG.

TO A WELSH AIR, "AR HYD Y NOS.

OLD I am, yet not past feeling,
Maïden think not so;
Time, the thief, for ever stealing
Moments as they go.
Still the moment dear has left me,
Moment that of self bereft me,
Moment that did wound with healing,
Cause and cure of woe.

Hope, and yet not hope, it gave me—
Oh! that lovely smile—
Hope, alas! too brief to save me,
Yet 'twas sweet the while.
Bright as joy, and sweet as pity,
Little like thyself, and pretty,
Nought beside can now enslave me,
Nothing else beguile

Old I am and daily older,
Not in days alone,
Yet, methinks, that I am bolder
Since that grey I 'm grown;
Young, I had not dared address thee,
Old, I may presume to bless thee,
Hope is dead and fancies moulder,
All but Love is flown.

Smile again. The look that gazes,
Asks not, wants not, no;
Laugh at me and all my praises,
Laugh at all my woe.
But when I have done with sighing,
In the quiet churchyard lying,
Softly smile upon the daisies
On my grave that grow.

ON SEEING THREE YOUNG LADIES ON GRASMERE LAKE.

WITHIN the compass of a little vale
There lies a Lake unknown in Fairy tale,
Which not a Poet knew in ancient days,
When all the world believed in Ghosts and Fays;
Yet on that Lake I have beheld a Boat
That seemed a fairy Pinnace all afloat,
On some bless'd mission to a distant isle,
To do meet worship to some ruined pile,
Where long of yore the Fairies used to meet
And haply hallow with their last retreat;
For all alone the boat was on the waters,
And in it three of "Beauty's youngest daughters."
Sometimes at rest, like infant on a pillow,
Then gliding soft as light upon a billow,
When lady's hand drew nigh to lady's breast
The oar, so fond:—yet there it might not rest,
But thence dispatched, went forth like errant knight
For new achievement on the plain so bright.

Oh! when it stopped, the boat, and damsels three
Charming the calm air with their triple glee,
While all the shadows on the lake projected,
Moved little as the mountains they reflected;
It seemed a thing ordained for aye to stay
Just where it was and sleep from day to day.
And when it moved with slide and gentle stroke,
Rippling the shadow of the hanging oak,
Sole motion, only life on all the mere,
'Twas like the motion of the lapsing year,
Which none would more expect or wish to cease
Than his own pulse.
The fancy of old Greece
That gave to beauty and to loveliness
The definite outline and the shape express,
Could not conceive, and therefore could not make,
Aught so divine as that still evening Lake,
With shadow deep, with gold and purple glowing,
And those three lovely maids upon its bosom rowing.

MARRIED LIFE.

WRITTEN ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF A WEDDING DAY.

THE earth once more hath run its annual round,
And smiles as faintly at the paling sun
As when by holy rite ye twain were bound,
And a glad brother's voice proclaimed ye one;

One in the Lord, as one in heart and choice,
For ye alike had chosen the better way,
And therefore will with holy glee rejoice,
When Autumn grave brings back the wedding-day.

All hath not haply been as young conceit
Of wedded bliss the story would compose,
But have ye found the song of love less sweet
Because translated into household prose?

Duties there needs must be, and toils, and cares,
And there may be some salutary pains,
That unexpected come and unawares
To all that walk in wedlock's lightest chains.

The man who tills the blessed Saviour's land,
Must sow a seed that oft is long a growing;
And she that would assist with patient hand,
Must water daily while her spouse is sowing.

The world besieges sore the wedded pair,
And many a charm of youth is early blighted,
But Heaven preserve ye both from fruitless care,
And bless the day whereon ye were united.

A POOR MAN'S REASONS FOR NOT MARRYING.

I HEARD thy voice amid the psalm,
Where many voices meet,
Yet thy low voice was like a calm,
It was so soft and sweet.
'Twas like a calm upon the ocean,
When seas have been in wild commotion.

I heard thy voice one summer eve
Within thy lowly cot,
When I am sure thou didst believe
That mortal heard it not.
And then thy voice was bold and strong,
Singing a solitary song.

I heard a meagre mother sing,
With small and whining note,
To soothe a little pining thing,
From bare and hungry throat;
And then I thought, O lady mine,
May never such a song be thine!

LINES WRITTEN IMPROMPTU AFTER HEARING A LADY SINGING.

Like a blithe birdie in a darksome isle
Of changeless holly mid a spacious wood;
Such was the song, and such the pensive smile,
Robed in the garb of early widowhood.
And yet not so, the birdie has a nest,
And sings of hopes and joys that yet are coming,
When every bush is in its vernal best,
And all her callow brood are sunk to rest
To thousand thousand insects' joyous humming.
But not in hope the human songstress trills
The lilt of joy, or long, long note of sorrow;
We sing not well till frequent proofs of ills
Have made us too distrustful of to-morrow;
And yet sometimes we gladly would be gay—
So let 's rejoice in joy of yesterday.

Dec. 26th, 1840.

GOOD NIGHT.

Good night, good friend, good night to thee,
Good night, sweet lady fair and free,
For the night has been a good night to me,
Though thou art come from a far countree.

Smiles soft and still, not laughter high,
Have gladdened our quiet company,
And ever and aye with a happy sigh
Thou smilest on the baby sleeping by.

See how the baby smiles in her sleep.
What dream on her soul doth lightly creep?
What fancy so pretty is playing bo-peep
With the innocent's thoughts in the fields of sleep?

When slumbering babies smile in a dream,
'Tis their angel, as antique faith would deem,
That plays with their hearts like a moonlight beam,
Stealing through chinks to a hidden stream.

Good night, good night, the smile is past,
And I must say good night at last;
I am long agoing, but hark to the blast,
And the rain that patters so loud and fast.

But I will carry sweet thought away,
To sweeten my bread for many a day,
When I think of the beautiful babe that lay
So calm yet as bright as an image of May.

VALENTINE, BY AN AGED LOVER.

Some ladies like a man whose hair
  Is bright as threads of gold,
Some the dark youth and some the fair,
  But few the man that 's old.
My locks were jetty black in May,
But latest autumn makes them grey.
Where is the maiden that will twine
Round doddered oak, a lithe woodbine,
And choose an old man for her valentine.

'Twere vain to say thou wilt be free
  To merry be or grave;
Better an old man's darling be,
  Than be a young man's slave.
'Twere vain to talk of common sense,
And lessons of experience;
For tears that in the dim eye shine,
And trace the wrinkle's furrowed line,
Were never shed by winsome valentine.

LINES.

If I were young as I have been,
And you were only gay sixteen,
I would address you as a goddess,
Write loyal cantos to your boddice,
Wish that I were your cap, your shoe,
Or any thing that 's near to you.
But I am old, and you, my fair,
Are somewhat older than you were.
A lover's language in your hearing
Would sound like irony and jeering.
Once you were fair to all that see,
Now you are only fair to me.

As the dew of the morning bestars every blade,
But ere noon is no more on the plain,
Yet abides in the bell of the flower in the shade
Till dew comes at evening again.

So the feelings of youth, the fond faith of the heart,
In manhood dry up like the dew.
Oh! let them survive in the soul's better part,
Till death shall the morning renew.

NEVER till now I felt myself so old
As seeing you so tall, such bursting roses
Just at the time when rosy buds unfold
Their sweet concealment into summer posies.

So may I measure time, nor cease to see
His silent work in still maturing graces.
I quite forgive what he has done to me,
For what he has bestow'd on your sweet faces.

TO A FRIEND LEAVING GRASMERE.

SWEET Grasmere vale, though I must leave
  Thy hills and quiet waters,
Nor sing again at fragrant eve
  To glad thy winsome daughters,
Yet will I fondly think of thee,
And thy fair maids will think of me,
  When I am far away.

I think of thee, but 'tis a thought
  That has no touch of sadness;
I joy to think that I have brought
  To thee so much of gladness.
Such thoughts I fain would leave behind
To maidens that are fair and kind,
  When I am far away.

SONG.

—♦—

HAVE you seen the stars at morning,
How they blend with rising day,
Paling still and still adorning
All the morn with their decay.
Paling, blinking,
Coyly winking,
While the gold usurps the grey.

So with fancies of the heathen,
Brightest stars of heathen night,
Slowly of their reign bereaven,
Lose themselves in Gospel light.
Stars of warning
Melt in morning,
End their task and bid good night.

SONG.

You ask me to sing—I 'd be glad if I could
Sing like a thrush in the underwood,
Like a twinkling lark that sings up in the sky,
Or a swan that sings only when going to die.
Ere now I have sung, when my heart was young,
  Like cock-crow loud and clearly,
But I cannot sing now, I protest, I vow,
  Because I love you dearly.

Could I sing like a syren—but that would I not,
Could I sing like a minstrel whose name is forgot,
But whose strain is a treasure which all men may
    borrow,
To harmonise joy and to sweeten their sorrow,
Oh, then I would sing to my dear, dear thing,
  Like cock-crow loud and clearly,
But I cannot sing now, I protest, I vow,
  Because I love you dearly.

Could I sing what I feel, and express by a note
How justly esteeming, how fondly I dote,
Then would music no more be a nice thing of art,
But as in old time the true voice of the heart.
I could sing all day long—sing song after song,
  Like an angel singing clearly,
But I cannot sing now, I protest, I vow,
  Because I love you dearly.

THE SOLACE OF SONG.

When on my mother's arm I lay
A happy helpless thing,
Still was I glad by night and day
To hear my mother sing,
Baby, baby, do not cry,
It was a lovely lullaby.

I was a boy, a wayward boy,
And yet I still would cling,
With something like a baby joy,
To any that could sing.
Sing up, sing high, a merry lay,
For 'tis a merry holiday.

I was a youth, a sighing youth,
A zephyr of the spring,
And then I thought that all was truth
That I was fond to sing.
Sweetly, sweetly let me die
In the soft breathing of a sigh.

But now, alas, I am a man,
And time has pruned my wing,
And I have but a little space
To flutter and to sing.
Singing to the autumn blast,
Be my sweetest song my last.

And should I live to be an old,
An old forgotten thing,
Yet never may my heart be cold
When holy maidens sing.
Holy, holy, may the Psalm
My very latest sense embalm!

A SONG WITHOUT A TUNE.

A song without a tune
I made in the month of June,
Eighteen hundred and forty-eight;
'Tis right to be exact in date.

Sweet lassy, parted we have been
A full twelvemonth and more,
And many a change the world has seen,
And many a heart been sore.
Kings that were mighty monarchs then
Are not, or nothing are but men.

And many a maid that loved a man
Of wealth and high degree
Must try to love him, if she can,
In perilous poverty.
For in the wild creed of the time,
To have been rich is deem'd a crime.

We were not rich, we were not kings,
We are just where we were;
No hope has borne us on its wings,
To drop us in despair.
I might forget an hour had pass'd
Since the sweet hour I saw thee last,

Thou art so very like the maid
I saw twelve months ago;
And yet almost I am afraid
Thou dost not feel it so.
Thou art, my love, the same to me,
But am I quite the same to thee?

The lines are deeper on my brow,
The corners of my eyes
Are quaintly netted, I allow,
As wings of dragon flies;
My cheek the red and yellow dapple,
Much like a last year's russet apple.

A year is nothing to a man
That forty years hath seen;
But, ah! it is no little span,
'Twixt fifteen and sixteen.

Now I perceive a year hath flown,
And thou almost a woman grown.

A something sure hath cross'd thy view,
Or perhaps some lady sage
Hath told what to thy hopes is due,
And to thy stately age:
Yet thou hast not forgot me—no;
But thou would'st very fain do so.

Farewell! I will not vex thee more,—
I would not be a blot
On thy fair page, a fretting sore,
An ever-tangled knot.
What matter what thou think'st on me,
While thy young heart is glad and free.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

A NEW VERSION.

Not what I would, but what I could,
I give our little Queen so good,
Adapting thus a custom'd strain
To the sweet promise of her reign,
Whatever men in any part lie,
May they be loyal all as Hartley

Coleridge.

God save our Island's hope,
Long live the people's hope,
God bless our Queen.
Still may our Queen be free,
Then evermore will she
Love that good liberty
Which makes her Queen.

Oh! may she prize that gem
Bright in her diadem,
Fair on her brow;
So, to the end of days,
May God approve her ways,
And heaven resound her praise
As earth does now.

Lord keep her evermore,
Pure in her own heart's core,
Kind and serene;
So shall the wise and good
Reverence her womanhood,
And the glad multitude
Love their young Queen.

May He that dwells on high
All her thoughts sanctify;
Seraphs unseen
Sing up with holy glee,
"Let this maid's name still be
Omen of victory,"
God save the Queen!

"Non bene conveniunt nec unâ in sede morantur
Majestas et amor."—Ov. Met., ii. 846.

A wanton bard in heathen time,
In sensual age and sensual clime,
Hath sung that no accord can be
Of love with god-like majesty.
Far other had his sentence been
Had gentle Ovid ever seen
An English home, a Christian Queen;
For love, content in cot to dwell,
Becomes a British palace well.
And our young Queen, whose happy choice
Has made a noble land rejoice,
Is sure the monarch need not smother
The feelings of a wife and mother.
A wife and mother truly great,
In woman's duties consummate,
Such is she now. And every wife
And mother wishes joy and life
To the good Queen that dignifies

The mother's cares, the baby's cries.
Now, every mother in the isle,
When she beholds her infant smile,
Should have a good wish and a prayer
For her the matron Queen so fair;
Who, though a Queen, has that in common
With every homely household woman,
That she has got a babe to love,
And knows there is a God above
That will the babes alike receive;
For they have all one mother Eve—
May in one well of life be laved,
And by one Jesus shall be saved.
Oh! may that God prepare their hearts,
Alike to fill their several parts.

Dec., 1840.

THE GUERNSEY LILY.

AMARYLLIS SAMIENSIS.

"This plant was brought from Japan, where it was found by Kaempfer and also by Thunberg, who visited that country in 1775. It was first cultivated in the garden of John Morin, at Paris, where it blowed for the first time on the 7th of October, 1634. It was then made known by Jacob Cornutus, under the name of 'Narcissus Japonicus flore rutilo.' After this it was again noticed by John Ray, in 1665, who called it the Guernsey Lily. A ship, returning from Japan, was wrecked on the coasts of Guernsey, and a number of the bulbs of this plant, which were on board, being cast on shore, took root in that sandy soil."—Beckman's Inventions, vol. iii.

FAR in the East, and long to us unknown,
A lily bloom'd, of colours quaint and rare;
Not like our lilies, white, and dimly fair,
But clad like Eastern monarch on his throne.
A ship there was by stress of tempest blown,
And wreck'd on beach, all sandy, flat, and bare;—
The storm-god bated of his rage to spare
The queenly flower, foredoom'd to be our own.
The Guernsey fisher, seeking what the sea
Had stolen to aid his hungry poverty,
Starts to behold the stranger from afar,
And wonders what the gorgeous thing might be,
That like an unsphered and dejected star
Gleam'd in forlorn and mateless majesty.

TO A YOUNG LADY FROM A FOREIGN CLIME.

THOU sweet exotic, lovely brown!
No fair one could be sweeter,—
Young as thou art, thou wilt not frown
Upon an old man's metre.

Rich is the sky where thou wert born,
And gorgeous were the flowers;
But yet I trust thou wilt not scorn
This cold blue sky of ours.

And though the flowers of Westmorland
Do not surcharge the wind
With burden of perfume so bland
As flowers of Western Ind;

Yet are they sweet if they be sought
Where careless eyes would miss them;
They crouch so low, as if they thought
A maid should stoop to kiss them.

Our little birds they are not deck'd
With hues of molten gems;
Their modest plumes do not reflect
The rays of diadems.

But yet they twitter sweetly, sweetly,
Their little notes so clear,
Methinks they could not sing more fitly
To little maiden's ear.

There is a blackness in thine hair—
A deep black in thine eye—
That do not speak of English air,
But of a hotter sky.

And there is something in the mouth,
Not easy to be told,
That marks thee of the passionate south,
And not of northern mould.

Then learn to love all simple things,
That pretty are and cool.
Look how the swallow dips its wings,
And glides along the pool;

For it hath felt the Afric suns
Voluptuously hot,
Yet comes to rear its little ones
Beside the English cot.

So may'st thou keep the tropic glow
And the full joy of life,
Yet tame thy current to the flow
Of a cheerful English wife.

AN AUTOGRAPH.

WHAT is the trifle which you would demand ?
The self-betraying of a tremulous hand,
That ne'er in useful labour was employed,
Though once with self-production overjoyed.
Its strutting capitals and whisking tails,
Quaint cyphers, slanting to the veering gales
Of vanity and would-be wit, implied
That e'en my digits felt a Poet's pride.
That pride of rhyme, that pert, pen-jerking joy,
Has left me long. I am no more a boy;
For yesternoon, alas! brought home to me
The solemn tidings I was forty-three.
At such an age the triumph of the pen
Is poor indeed to poor and pensive men.
And yet my pen finds something still to fee it,
Though mean my name, yet you desire to see it.

SONG.

Rose, and violet, and pansy,
Each has told a tale of love,
Various with the freak of fancy.
Apt and bold the fields to rove,
See the pansy;
Seek her not in secret grove.

Rose of summer, lovely creature!
Who did ever look on thee,
But beheld the very feature
Which he most was glad to see,—
Fairest, dearest,
Whosoe'er the dear may be?

Long ago, when I was roaming,
In a shady path I met,
Dim and blue as summer gloaming,
Far apart from all the rest,
Meek and lowly,
Her, my own dear violet.

THE OLD ARM-CHAIR:

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

High was my lineage, many an age ago
My grandsire nursed the mystic mistletoe,
By Druid shorn for dark primeval rite,
With golden sickle by the pale moonlight,
When forests dank of patriarchal oak,
"That never echo'd to the woodman's stroke,
In boundless contiguity of shade,"
Possess'd the destined seats of wealth and trade.
The dappled deer, the sullen shaggy bear,
The tall elk, bursting from its bosky lair,
And all the natural tribes of earth and air,
All, all, familiar with the gnarled tree,
Did homage to my sire's antiquity.
Had he possess'd a human heart and speech
As sage to know and eloquent to teach
As his dark brethren of Dodona, then
What tales could he have told of beasts and men!

Of Giant Albion, and his peer in fame,
That to far-jutting Cornwall * left his name,—
Of Trojan Brutus, and his progeny,
The boast of many a Welsh long pedigree,
And many a king and chief, forgotten long,
Embalm'd in Geoffrey's prose and Spenser's laureate song:
But mute he was, unable to divine
The lamentable lot of old Locrine;
Nor aught of Camber † or of Albinact
Could he relate, nor of poor Lear distract,
Though once, I think, that Lear was fain to house
And sing mad songs beneath my grandsire's boughs:
And sure the kindly tree bemoan'd his grief,
With groaning fibre and with quivering leaf.
The Romans came,—they came, they fought, they slew,
They conquer'd, reign'd awhile, and then withdrew
From Britain's isle. Yet, as wild winds bestrew
The long lanes that they make in close defiles
Of intermingled underwood for miles,
With wrecks and relics of their fatal glee,
And trophies of triumphant anarchy;
So, when the hairy myriads of the North
O'erleap'd the barrier,—when the Pict rush'd forth,

* Cornwall. The Giants Albion and Corineus are memorised by Geoffrey of Monmouth and by Spenser.

† Camber gave name to Cambria and Cumberland; Albinact to Albania, the poetic name of Scotland.

And Caledonia pour'd from cavern'd rocks,
From all her crankling bays and sinuous lochs,
From purple moor, green shaw, and quaking fen,
Her grisly superfluity of men,—
And not to heal, but aggravate the sore,
Came the red sea-kings from the Saxon shore,
Wave after wave, and blast outhowling blast,
Till all despair'd that any would be last;—
Though shy Civility and stately Form
Or fled or fell before the human storm,
Nor quite effaced were all the steps of Time,
For Druid saw was blent with Runic rhyme,—
The oak, which Briton bards had sung beneath,
And whence the Roman pluck'd his civic wreath,
Was still an oak, and grew in power and pride,
With its old shade, new kingdoms to divide.
My grandsire's story it were long to tell,—
How long he flourish'd, how at last he fell!
Was it his doom in shallow bark to bow
His knotty strength, and form a pirate's prow?
Made he the vast beam of a baron's hall,
Or board smooth-rubb'd for lavish festival?
Or iron-headed ram, to smite the tottering wall?
Ah no! He was a dedicated tree
From the first germ of his nativity.

For many a year in holy peace he stood,
The tallest of a noble brotherhood;
At length a godly king bestow'd their trunks
On a fraternity of studious monks,—
Good men, that wore the penitential weed.
Unquiet times of such meek men have need.

Long was the age—some thought an age too much—
That I was hallowed from a woman's touch.
I was a mere discomfort of a chair;
Monk did not sit in me, and did not dare:
My wooden arms had never clasped the fair.
My bones were stiff to plague the bones of others.
The long bare legs of those long-praying brothers
In me have left a dell, a hollow dint,
Beyond the date of reminiscent print.
But when bluff Harry rent the British rose
From the old stalk on which her sister grows,
When Luther's trumpet with a voice of storm
Defied the Pope and bid the Church reform,
Then I, alas! was but a bit of wood;
For those who leaned on me, and those that stood,
Or knelt beside me in accustom'd prayer,
Became the pensioners of earth and air.

Poor wanderers, doom'd from doubting souls to crave
The shelter and the food which late they gave.
While I—last note of a forgotten ditty,
No more a thing of worship, scarce of pity—
Am fain to rest unconsecrated now,
Like a pale votary forced to break her vow,
The humble inmate of a genial room,
Far from monastic pomp, monastic gloom.
I will not say how many men have sat
Between my arms to slumber or to chat;
What flying maid, what panting fugitive,
What sinner breathing the last word—forgive;
What lady-love, that dotes on babe so fresh,
And feels the life in its soft dimpling flesh;
Nor what besides of sorrow or of mirth
I may have witness'd by the glowing hearth.
'Tis true—(I fear not to reveal the truth)—
My later days were gayer than my youth;
Yet may my age for aye respected be,
For one good woman's sake that sat on me.

TO THE MAGPIE.

WHAT shall we say of thee, pert, perking Mag,
Whose every motion seems to fish for praise,
Whose whole existence is a game at brag?
Art thou a stranger quite to poet's lays,
With black and white thy pretty self adorning,
Like a blithe widow in her second mourning?

Thou wert the pet bird of the God of wine,
And dear thou art, and should'st be very dear,
To that great Son of Jove whose mighty line,
After long strife, and many a toilsome year,
Regain'd at last their lawful heritage,
And reign'd in southern Greece for many an age.

For great Alcides never had a home—
No wonder if his loves were vagabond.

Once in a hollow vale he chanced to roam,
And of a village maid grew sudden fond.
What shall we say?—the buxom village lass
Became the mother of Æchmacoras.*

The brawny sire, as usual, went his way,
New loves to woo—new monsters to destroy.
But the poor mother—she that went astray—
All husbandless, with her unfathered boy—
What can she do? Her ruthless father's curse
Bids her conceal a small sin with a worse.

She wrapt her baby in a lion's skin,
The lion's skin her roving lover gave,
And left the helpless witness of her sin
In the dark wood. Ye happy wood-nymphs, save,
As ye would keep your innocence secure,
The helpless thing—like you—so sweet and pure.

Nought that the poet feigned in happiest mood,
Or pagan priest invented in his trade,

* Æchmacoras, fil. Herculis, ex vitiatâ Phillone, filiâ Alcimedontis Herois; qui cùm in lucem editus fuisset, ab Alcimedonte, unà cùm matre Phillone, in proximo monte feris expositus fuit: ibi vagientem infantem cùm pica imitaretur, ad hujus avis vocem, quòd puerilem esse credidisset, Hercules fortè illàc iter habens conversus, puellam et a se genitum puerum agnovit, ambosque vinculis liberavit.—Pausan. in *Arcadic.* (Hofmanni Lex. Univ.)

Was ever half so beautiful or good
As the kind things that Nature's self hath made:
O'er the poor babe the magpie chatters still,
Soothes with its wings, and feeds it with its bill.

Ere long the strenuous foe of Hydra came—
He came in pride of some new conquest won;
But when he saw how pale the hapless dame,
The childless mother, by himself undone,
Enraged he rushed into the forest wild,
To seek the pledge of love, the hapless child.

I will not say how loud the thickets crash'd,
For he would never step an inch aside;
Or how far off the timid lions lash'd
Their sides; or how, less wild, the serpents eyed
The trampling terror. Nought he cared for this—
For lion's inward growl, or serpent's smothered hiss —

But ever onward he pursued the cry,
The still repeated one note of the bird,
That faithful sat where that poor babe did lie.
Still he pursued the note, and never err'd;
And there he found them both—the babe and Mag—
In the dark wood, beneath the mossy crag.

The babe became a hero in its time;
The bird, its task performed, it fled away.
To the good bird I dedicate this rhyme;
The hero lives in many an antique lay.
Oh could my song preserve thy nest of briar,
As thou the babe Herculean for its sire!

TO A RED HERRING.

WONDER of art and nature! ocean-born,
Like Aphrodite, Queen of Love and Life,
And those white nymphs that dwell in crystal bowers,
And oft, when ships were rare, and none had burst
Into that ocean which first Cortez view'd
From Darien's heights, beneath the summer moon,
Were wont to weave their labyrinthine dance
On the smooth surface of the sacred sea,
To minstrelsy of kindred sprites of air,—
Child of the waves! whose antique ancestry
Saw unappall'd, say rather with huge joy,
The avenging fountains of the deep broke up,
And the vast hollow globe of waters pour
Dark and continuous o'er the offending earth.
Then did the creatures of the sea rejoice!
The arrowy shark shot swift o'er cities drown'd,
But soon grew sluggish with mere gluttony;
Then herrings fearless stray'd o'er all the world,

For even the hungriest tyrants of the floods,
The finny aristocracy, o'ergorged
With flesh, for fish had no more appetite
Than pious Papist at the end of Lent.
Herrings were happy then, but were not red;
The green effulgence of their scaly suit
Rippled the sunny sea with emerald light
For many a league, what time their countless hosts
Sped from their chill septentrion nursery,
In numbers without number, numberless!
A tribe to which the whole of Adam's race,
By Leuwenhoeck seen through optic lens,
With all whom Malthus, and his sage compeers,
Extinguish'd in the breeding womb of time
By vice and misery—and, oh, ye Gods!
Moral restraint, were but a band élite,
A biped aristocracy, as few
As Protestants in Erin, as the pale
Albino monster upon Afric shore,
As gentlemen in Parliament reform'd,
As honest men—in any place you please.

TO A CAT.

NELLY, methinks, 'twixt thee and me,
There is a kind of sympathy;
And could we interchange our nature,—
If I were cat, thou human creature,—
I should, like thee, be no great mouser,
And thou, like me, no great composer;
For, like thy plaintive mews, my muse,
With villainous whine doth fate abuse,
Because it hath not made me sleek
As golden down on Cupid's cheek;
And yet thou canst upon the rug lie,
Stretch'd out like snail, or curl'd up snugly,
As if thou wert not lean or ugly;
And I, who in poetic flights
Sometimes complain of sleepless nights,
Regardless of the sun in heaven,
Am apt to dose till past eleven.

The world would just the same go round
If I were hang'd and thou wert drown'd;
There is one difference, 'tis true,—
Thou dost not know it, and I do.

ANGELS have wings? Well, let them grow—
May it be long before you know
  Whether they have or not.
But geese have wings, and quills as good,
Perhaps, as wings of angels could
  Supply—could they be got.
But oh! dear lady, why contrive
To make the vainest man alive
  Conceited more than ever:
I will not call these pens divine,
But certain they were pens of thine,
  And that 's enough, however.

DE ANIMABUS BRUTORUM.

No doubt 'twere heresy, or something worse
Than aught that priests call worthy of damnation,
Should I maintain, though in a sportive verse,
That bird or fish can e'er attain salvation;
Yet some have held that they are all possess'd,
And may be damn'd, although they can't be bless'd.

Such doctrine broach'd Antonio Margerita,
A learned Spaniard, mighty metaphysical.
To him the butterfly had seem'd a Lytta,—
His wasp-stung wits were grown so quaint and phthisical;
To him the sweetest song of Philomel
Had talk'd of nothing in the world but hell.

Heaven save us all from such a horrid dream!
Nor let the love of heaven,—of heaven, forsooth!—
Make hard our hearts, that we should so blaspheme
God for Christ's sake, and lie for love of truth.
Poor Tray! art thou indeed a mere machine,
Whose vital power is a spirit unclean?

If all the lives that throng the air and earth,
And swarm innumerous in the slimy deep,
Die once for all, and have no second birth,—
If, ceasing once, they do not even sleep,
But are no more than sounds of yesterday,
Or rainbow tints that come and pass away,—

Yet are they not to loving Nature lost;
She doth but take them to herself again!
The curious pencilling of moonlit frost
Melts in the morning ray, and leaves no stain;
Yet every drop preserved distils in showers,
And winds along the path of dewy flowers.

Nor shall they all in their oblivion lie,
Nor lack the life, though vain that life may be,
Which breathes in strains that wasting time defy:
A poet's song can memorise a flea;
The subtle fancy of deep-witted Donne,
The wee phlebotomist descanted on.

And once that strenuous insect leap'd by chance
Upon the white breast of a Gallic dame;
Forthwith the wits of universal France
Vied to consign the happy flea to fame!

Pasquier, the gravest joker of his age,
Berhymed La Puce in many a polished page.

The Teian bard, so skittish and so hoary,
That loved so well all things that merry be,
In honied phrases gave to blithest glory
The shrill cicada chirping cheerily;
The bloodless songster drunk with balmy dew,
Whose happy being every year is new.

That sad old wag, that Peter Pindar hight,
Who was no worshipper of William Pitt's,
Did whilome soar a bold Pindaric flight
To celebrate the progeny of nitts,
Telling how once a creature without wings
The crown invaded of the best of kings.

The insect empress, and her clustering throng
Of chemists, famed for geometric skill,
Have lent their laboured sweets to Virgil's song,
Their stings bequeathed to wicked Mandeville;
Wealthy as Tyre their homes, the more their sorrow,
Like Tyre despoiled, and smothered like Gomorrah.

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard, and be wise!"
So said the amorous king that wrote of hyssop,—

You know the rest. Nothing that creeps or flies
Reads half so good a lesson in all Æsop.
Great Johnson has berhymed the words; I swear,
He 'd better far have left them as they were.

No question you have heard of Virgil's gnat,
Which by our gentle Spenser was transmuted,
Though probably I need not tell you that
Its authenticity is much disputed;
And 'tis denied also by judgments nice
That Homer ever sung of frogs and mice.

If Homer did not, some one did, I 'm sure;
The tale is extant in the choicest Greek.
Can living tongue express, in phrase so pure,
The deep bass croak, and shriller treble squeak?
And Aristophanes no title lacks
To his BREKEKEKEX KOAX KOAX.

But thou dark dweller of the central rock,
Spawned ere avenging waves the hills o'erflowed,
Survivor of full many an earthquake's shock,
Last of the Troglodytes, primæval toad,
Like antique virtue, hated upon earth,
Or trampled under foot, like modest worth,—

Time was (or else our ancestors were liars)
That thou to mystic verse wert not unknown,
When witches danced around Tartarean fires,
To screech of owls and mandrake's fatal groan;
For thou could'st drain the marrow, mad the brains,
Or foulest passion breed in chastest veins.

Most poets are great wanderers by night,
And love the moon, though sons of Phœbus call'd;
And well we ken the small scarce-moving light
Of the she, wingless, amorous emerald,
That keeps her lone lamp burning for her mate,
Pining because he always is so late.

Unlike her kindred of the glowing zone,
That star the dark groves of the tropic even,
There the proud earth has comets of her own,
And every shoal out-fires the distant heaven,
And all the groves and underwoods unfold
A gorgeous blossoming of fire and gold.

Is it to soothe our sorrow, or deride,
That these bright insects leave both flower and tree,
And swarm upon the new-heaped earth beside
The pit designed for dead mortality?

Who has not heard of death-lights on a grave?
And these are death-lights, gay, and bright, and brave!

But who may count, with microscopic eye,
The multitudes of lives that gleam and flash
Behind the rousing keel, and multiply
In myriad millions, when the white oars dash
Through waves electric, or at stillest night
Spread round the bark becalm'd their milky white?

Oh, had the bards that did so sweetly sing
In times of old, when poesy was young,
Known but the half, in their quick blooming spring,
Of what we know, how sweetly had they sung!
Then many a plant, that yet has not a name,
Had won a story and a deathless fame;

And many a living thing of instinct wise,
Of form majestic, or of brightest plume,
That o'er the vast South Sea unwearied flies,
Or mid the broad magnolia's fiery bloom
Builds its low nest, had been beloved of men,
Like Robin Redbreast and plain Jenny Wren.

TO GOODY TWOSHOES.

Ah, little Goody! I have known thee long,
And feel it strange to call thee Lady Jones.
Art thou as happy mid the bowing throng
As when thou hadst thy *two shoes* on the stones?
Sole sound of comfort that could reach thy heart,
When thy companion child must needs depart.

Thy lamb, thy raven, and thy box of letters,
Thy love for all the tribes of earth and air,
Thy shrewd odd sayings, apt to make thy betters,
Or folks so called, look round with wondrous stare,
And deeper minds reflect on wisdom given
To fortune's waifs by compensating Heaven;—

All these, to curious childhood dear, as new,
Retain a value to the satiate age,

And press full oft before the inward view
Of souls long strangers to the brief square page,
The tinselled covers, and the strange old pictures
That served our ancestors instead of lectures.

I 've trembled with thee in the church so cold,
And fearful in its soundless solitude.
What place so weary as deserted fold,
Where few hours past the shepherd wise and good
Had spoke the words that take the sting from death,
And change our human tears to wells of faith?

But more of fear and more of pain was thine,
And short and smothered was thy sweet breath, when
A little musty hay, a narrow line
Of darkness, parted thee from evil men,
With horrid whisper plotting crime and plunder,
Mocking with muttered oaths the awful thunder.

A neighbourhood unmeet for one like thee;
Yet out of evil, maids whose minds are right,
As thine was in its sweet simplicity,
Draw blessings for themselves; celestial light
Beams on the weakest in extreme distresses—
Assurance, where proud prudence hardly guesses.

Such wert thou, Goody, in thy childish days,
And though, no doubt, thou didst grow old in time,
And wert a spinster much deserving praise,
That praise I will not speak in prose or rhyme;
For rather I 'd believe thee tripping still
With Ralph the Raven, and with Baa-Lamb Bill.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY,

NEITHER THE ESQUIRE, THE LAUREATE, THE LL.D., BUT THE GOOD MAN, THE MERRY MAN, THE POET, AND THE DOCTOR,

He was not born beneath the Cambrian hills;
No mountain breezes lull'd his infant slumbers;
Loud rattling cars, and penny-dropping tills,
And blended murmurs of conglomerate numbers,
Were the chief sounds that baby Robert heard;
The pecking sparrow, his sole household bird.

Great Bristol was his nest and natal town,
And not till he had cast his baby frock
He felt the liberal air of Durdum Down,
Or look'd on Avon from St. Vincent's rock,
Whence many a bark was seen in trim array,
Bound on bad quest to hapless Africa.

'Tis hard to say what might have been his lot,
If born with Nature from the first to dwell;

Yet am I prone to guess that he would not
Have conn'd, or known, or loved her half so well.
She was a stranger to his opening eyes,
Clad with the charm of still renew'd surprise.

And finding little in the daily round
To fashion fancy from the things of sense,
His love of kin was all the more profound;
Not wide in surface, but in act intense,
Affection still a dutiful reality,
The ground and law, and soul of all morality.

Yet keeping still his little heart at home,
He wander'd with his mind in realms remote,
Made playmates of the Fairy, Sylph, and Gnome,
And knew each Giant, Knight, and Wight of note
Whate'er of wonderful the East and North,
Darkly commingling, gender'd and brought forth.

Sweet thought he found, and noble, in the story
Of the Wehr-Wolf and sweet Red Ridinghood,
Shudder'd at feast of Ogre, raw and gory,
And watch'd the Sleeping Beauty in the wood.

* * * *

THE LARCH GROVE.

LINE above line the nursling larches planted,
Still as they climb with interspace more wide,
Let in and out the sunny beams that slanted,
And shot and crankled down the mountain's side.

The larches grew, and darker grew the shade;
And sweeter aye the fragrance of the Spring;
Pink pencils all the spiky boughs arrayed,
And small green needles called the birds to sing.

They grew apace as fast as they could grow,
As fain the tawny fell to deck and cover,
They haply thought to soothe the pensive woe,
Or hide the joy of stealthy tripping lover.

Ah, larches! that shall never be your lot;
Nought shall you have to do with amorous weepers,
Nor shall ye prop the roof of cozy cot,
But rumble out your days as railway sleepers.

DENT.

I.

THERE is a town, of little note or praise,
Narrow and winding are its rattling streets,
Where cart with cart in cumbrous conflict meets,
Hard straining up or backing down the ways,
Where insecure the crawling infant plays,
And the nigh savour of the hissing sweets
Of pan or humming oven rankly greets
The hungry nose that threads the sinuous maze;
Yet there the lesson of the pictured porch,
The beauty of Platonic sentiment,
The sceptic wisdom, positive in doubt,
All creeds and fancies, like the hunter's torch,
Caught each from each, perfection find in Dent,
Where what they cannot get they do without.

GEOLOGY.

II.

In that small town was born a worthy wight,
(His honest townsmen well approve his worth,)
Whose mind has pierced the solid crust of earth,
And roam'd undaunted in the nether night.
His thought a quenchless incorporeal light,
Has thrid the labyrinth of a world unknown,
Where the old Gorgon time has turned to stone
Long thorny snake and monstrous lithophyte.
Long mayst thou wander in that deep obscure,
And issuing thence, good sage, bring with thee still
That honest face, where truth and goodness shine;
Right was thy creed, as all thy life was pure.
And yet if certain persons had their will,
The fate of Galileo had been thine.

TRANSLATIONS.

FROM THE GERMAN.

THERE is an angel that abides
  Within the budding rose;
That is his home, and there he hides
  His head in calm repose.
The rose-bud is his humble bower,
And yet he often loves to roam;
And wending through the path of Heaven,
Empurples all the track of even.

If e'er he sees a maiden meek,
  He hovers nigh, and flings
Upon the modest maiden's cheek
  The shadow of his wings.
Oh, lovely maiden, dost thou know
Why thy cheeks so warmly glow?
'Tis the Angel of the Rose,
That salutes thee as he goes.

FROM CATULLUS.

PASSER, DELICIÆ MEÆ PUELLÆ.

LITTLE sparrow, pretty sparrow,
Darling of my "winsome marrow,"
Plaything, playmate, what you will,
Tiny love, or naughty Phil,
Tempted, teased, to peck and hop
On her slender finger top,
Free to nuzzle and to rest
In the sweet valley of her breast;
Her wee, wee comfort in her sorrow's wane,
When sinks to sleep the fever of her pain.

Little sparrow, come to me,
I can play as well as she,
And like her I would be fain
Thou could'st sport away my pain,
Dear to me as fruit of gold,
Which by crafty lover roll'd,
In that fleet maiden's path, untwisted all
The quaint knots of her cincture virginal.

FROM CATULLUS.

LUGETE, O VENERES CUPIDINESQUE.

WEEP and wail, ye Cupids all,
That are pretty and but small;
Weep, ye pretty winged brothers,
Weep, ye pretty goddess mothers;
Every soul on earth that 's pretty,
Weep and wail for very pity.
He is dead, the pretty sparrow,
Darling of my "winsome marrow,"
Dearer than her own eyes to her;
For so well the creature knew her,
She did not know her mother better;
Not a moment would he quit her,
Hopping hither, flitting thither,
Ever blest while he was with her;
Piping shrill and twittering clearly,
To her alone whom he loved dearly.
Now the dark way he is wending,
Whence they say is no ascending.

Ill luck be with thee, gloomy hollow,
That every pretty thing dost swallow,
To steal away my pretty sparrow!
Alas! poor bird—oh, deed of sorrow!
My sweet one's eyes, with tears so salt,
Are red and swollen; 'tis all thy fault.

SCHILLER'S TRANSLATION OF MACBETH.

In Schiller's translation of Macbeth, in the 3rd Scene of the 1st Act, lines, of which the following are a free version, are substituted for the original Conference of the Weird Women, previous to the entrance of Macbeth and Banquo. It was manifestly the purpose of Schiller to discard the witch element altogether out of his "Weird Sisters," and to raise them to a level with the Eumenides and Parcæ. As a modern poet, writing for time present, and probably for the time to come, he might be right in omitting the killing swine, the sailor's thumb, the chestnut munching; but his idea is not in the spirit of ancient or modern demonology. If Schiller showed a more refined taste, Shakspeare exhibits a wider knowledge and a deeper philosophy.

First Witch. Sister, let 's hear: what hast thou been doing?

Second. On the sea I 've been busy at wrecking and ruin.

Third. Sister, what thou?

First. I saw a fisherman all in rags—

A very heap of rags was he,—
Yet he mended his nets and sang merrily,
And cared no more how the old world wags,
Than if he 'd the wealth of the sea in his bags.
At his work late and early,
The light-hearted churl, he

Sang merrily, greeting the eve and the morn.
I hated his mirth—'twas too much to be borne
To see him so merry both early and late.
I had sworn the deadly oath of hate,
And his note must be changed or I forsworn.
So the next time that his net he dragg'd,
With a golden burden the full net swagg'd.
'Tis down on the nail the yellow ones glimmer;
He gloats till his peepers wax dimmer and dimmer.
He hugg'd the bright devil, he lugg'd it along,
And there was an end of his mirth and his song;
And then he lived like the Prodigal Son,
  And he gave to his lust dominion.
But Mammon, the rogue, he soon was gone,—
  He fled with a lusty pinion.
'Twas faery gold, and he thought "All 's well;"
He knew not—the fool!—'twas the loan of hell.
And all was spent, and grim Want came;
  Away slunk the lads of the revel.
Grace cast off him, and he cast off shame,
  And he gave himself up to the Devil.
And he served the fiend with hand and will,
And he went to and fro to pillage and kill.
I chanced to pass this very day
  Where on the gold he lighted:

On the bare beach I found him howling away,
With wan looks scathed and blighted.
And hark what said the hope-lorn elf:—
"False witch, false ocean's daughter,
Thou gavest me gold,—thou shalt have myself!"
So plunged in the salt water.

STATIUS, LIB. I. 493.

—♦—

OBTUTU gelida ora premit, lætusque per artus
Horror iit: sensit manifesto numine ductos
Affore, quos nexis ambagibus augur Apollo
Fortendi generos, vultu fallente ferarum,
Ediderat. Tunc sic tendens ad sidera palmas:
Nox, quæ terrarum cœlique amplexa labores
Ignea multivago transmittis sidera lapsu,
Indulgens reparare animum, dum proximus ægris
Infundat Titan agiles animantibus ortus,
Tu mihi perplexis quæsitam erroribus ultro
Advehis alma fidem, veterisque exordia fati
Detegis: adsistas operi, tuaque omina firmes
Semper honoratam dimensis orbibus anni
Te domus ista colet: nigri tibi, diva, litabunt
Electa cervice greges, lustraliaque exta
Lacte novo perfusus edet Vulcanius ignis.
Salve, prisca fides tripodum, obscurique recessus.
Deprendi, Fortuna, deos.

HIS chilly lips hard closing at the sight,
His every member *grueing* with delight,
At once by tokens manifest he spies
That they are here, whom quaintly twisted plies

And knots and labyrinths of oracular saw,
Inspired by Phœbus, named his sons-in-law,
In form of beasts foreshown. With palms outspread
Towards the sky, in awful accent said
The king illumined: Thou, whose compass dread
And universal empire dost contain
Both heaven and earth and all their woe and pain;
Night, that transmittest stellar influence
With manifold illapse to heal the sense
Of weary mortals by a kind renewing,
Till Titan bid them to be up and doing:
At last in happy hour thou bring'st to me
The truth long sought in sore perplexity,—
Reveal'st the principles of Destiny.
Aid but the work, and make the omen sure,
From age to age thy rites shall still endure.
Yon house shall honour thee, O reverend Night!
With sable victims and drink-offerings white
Of purest milk. The hallow'd flame shall sup
The liquid gifts and eat the entrails up.
Hail secret place, all hail thou seat divine,
Mysterious symbol of the dreadful Trine!

PÆAN OF ARIPHOON THE SICYONIAN.

Ὑγιεια πρεσβιστη Μακαρον.

HOLIEST and first of all the happy powers,
Sacred Hygeia! let me dwell with thee—
For all the remnant of my living hours,
Come thou, benign, and share my home with me;
For if there be or good or grace
In riches, offering, or high place
Of godlike empery or delight,
Which, in the hidden nets of Aphrodite,
We would inveigle—aught at all
That from the gods poor man obtains
To soothe him in his toils and pains,—
Blest Hygeia! at thy call
Blossoms every pleasant thing:
With thee the Graces spend their spring;
But without thee
No living thing can happy be.

PROMETHEUS.

A FRAGMENT.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS fragment, which, if regarded as a dramatic scene, may be read as a whole, was written in or about the year 1820, when it was shown by the author to his father, who was much pleased with the commencement, and took great interest in the work. This may, however, have operated as a virtual discouragement. The elder Coleridge saw in the fable of Prometheus, as treated by Æschylus, a profound and complex *philosopheme*, which the unsphered spirit of Plato might have been taxed to unfold. Fully to master the idea, required a tension of mind which, it may be, the younger poet did not bring to the task. To work up such stern materials into poetry might have seemed to him impracticable, or at least foreign to his own genius; and, indeed, whoever will cast his eye over the disquisition on this subject, in the second volume of "Coleridge's Literary Remains," will not be surprised that the youthful Telemachus shrunk from the attempt to bend his father's bow.

As the poetry in these volumes is by no means

intended exclusively for scholars, it may not be amiss to give a short analysis of the Æschylean drama, from which the following scene is professedly imitated. The Titan Prometheus has stolen fire from heaven, and thereby introduced among mankind the knowledge of mechanic arts. Jupiter, incensed by his presumption, and nowise approving the philanthropic motive by which it was dictated, requires Vulcan to bind the rebel to a rock in Mount Caucasus. Vulcan executes this commission by his ministers, Strength and Force. Prometheus is left alone. The Sea Nymphs, and Ocean himself, endeavour to comfort the sufferer, offering to plead with Jupiter in his behalf; but he sternly declines their mediation. The Egyptian Io appears, to whom Prometheus reveals the course of her wanderings and the extent of her sufferings, in her flight from the persecution of the jealous Juno; and that by one of her descendants, Hercules, the son of Jupiter, he himself is destined to be released. He speaks of Jupiter in terms of bold defiance, announcing that he will be dethroned by a son whom Io will bear to him. Mercury (Hermes) is despatched to demand from him the disclosure of this secret on pain of further vengeance. Prometheus refuses to comply, and is swept away by a thunderbolt.

It is, I am aware, doing sore injustice to the very remarkable interpretation of this sublime fable above alluded to, to give the results without detailing the process. For this I must refer to the original essay, which requires, and will, I think, fully repay, an attentive and thoughtful perusal. Suffice it to say here, that Jupiter and Prometheus are explained to mean Law and Reason, contrasted, yet akin to each other. Jupiter is Law, stern, imperative, controlling the universe; and in one aspect, Political Law, Juno being the Sacerdotal *Cultus*, the wedded servant of the state, coerced but unsubmissive, jealous (not, it must be confessed, without cause) of Io, the mundane Religion migrating from land to land: while Prometheus is Reason, the super-sensual light in man, free, though in bonds, and struggling against the despot with a prospect of ultimate emancipation. Hermes is Custom, or I should rather say, marketing expediency, ever worldly and complying; while the Ocean Nymphs are the natural solicitings from this visible scene, by which the soul is tempted to forget her original, to forego her privileges, and to forfeit her destiny.

It is easy to surmise in what spirit and with what skill this subject would have been handled by Dryden,

and in this style I believe that he might have found a worthy successor in Hartley Coleridge. But to embody so profound an idea not in witty abstractions, but in living forms, "simple, sensuous, passionate," speaking with lyric earnestness, and combining in a progressive action, was a design more easy for the father to conceive than for the son to execute. Sooth to say, the latter was not disposed to bore so deep for the waters of inspiration. His Hippocrene was no Artesian well, though it flowed naturally from a living fountain far enough beneath the surface.

Soon afterwards the subject was taken up by the splendid genius of Shelley, who brought to it vehement impulse, exhaustless fancy, the music of the spheres, and a diction glittering as sunlight in the mist of a waterfall. He did not bring a clear insight or a sane judgment. His conception, or adaptation of the *mythus*, stripped of its gorgeous dress, may be called vulgar, at once false and obvious. With him Jupiter is the oppression of the world, secular and religious, "the powers that be," as they appeared to his diseased vision; and Prometheus is reluctting, up-surging humanity. However, a poem was produced which might well have disheartened a young contemporary from the semblance of competition.

Once interrupted, the work could not be resumed. In a letter written eighteen years afterwards, he thus alludes to his intention of completing certain Essays, &c., "and, D. V., Prometheus; but of this I cannot speak with certainty, so difficult is it to recommence any work of imagination after an interval. I do not think it would have been possible for my father to have continued Christabel, had his health been ever so joyous, or its reception ever so encouraging. He might, indeed, have written a great deal more about Christabel, and what he wrote could not but have been valuable, but it would not have harmonised with the fragment; the joining would have been too apparent. I never knew a work in which there was any continuity at all which was successfully continued."

This poem will now be read with pleasure for its choice diction and tender fancy, more especially in the lyric movements, which are marked by a peculiar and expressive character. The pathos is not interrupted by any obtrusion of a secondary meaning, but it appears from the "Conclusion," (itself a very beautiful poem,) that the drama was intended to be symbolical.

PROMETHEUS.

SCENE.—*A desolate spot, supposed to lie beyond the limits of the habitable earth.* PROMETHEUS *discovered chained to a rock. Soft Music is heard in the distance, which, as it gradually draws nearer, becomes graver and slower.*

Chorus of SYLPHS *on the wing, who enter singing as follows:—*

LIGHTLY tripping o'er the land,
Deftly skimming o'er the main,
Scarce our fairy wings bedewing
With the frothy mantling brine,
Scarce our silver feet acquainting
With the verdure-vested ground;
Now like swallows o'er a river
Gliding low with quivering pinion,
Now aloft in ether sailing
Leisurely as summer cloud;
Rising now, anon descending,
Swift and bright as shooting stars,
Thus we travel glad and free.

Deep in a wilderness of bloom,
We felt the shaking of the air

Blown o'er deserts vast and idle,
O'er ambrosial fields of flowers,
O'er many a league, where never man
Imprest his footstep o'er the sand,
Or shook the dry and husky seeds
From the tall and feathery grass.

But 'twas not the liquid voice
Of warbling Nymphs their sea-love soothing,
'Twas not the billows of the breeze
That tells when sister Sylphs are coming;
Nay, 'twas a sound of terror and woe,
A noise of force and striving:
It was not the meeting of icebergs,
Whose crash might out-thunder the thunderer,
And their glare make the lightning look dim;
It was not the storm of the secret ocean,
That lashes the shore to the wild bear's howling;
For the loud-throated tempests are silent with horror,
And the sea stands still in amaze.
'Twas the piercing cry of immortal agony,
That taught a strange tongue to the first unkind echoes
Of this dull lump of earth, this joyless mountain.

[*Perceiving* PROMETHEUS.

Oh, sight of fear!

What shape is that, what goodly form divine,
That in yon bare and storm-beleaguer'd rift
Stands like a mark for sun and frosty wind
By turns to waste their idle shafts upon?
How horribly it glares! No sign of life,
Save in the ghastly rolling of those eyes!
Lives it, indeed? Or is the loathing spirit
Pent in a corse, a gaol, a hulk of flesh,
That is no more its own? Oh! do not look at it,
Or we shall all grow like it. Let us hence,—
Yet, hold! it breathes; methinks that I should know—
Hark! did he stir? Oh, no, he cannot!—fast,
Fast as a frozen sea, quite motionless!
Though every sinew stares as he were bent
To unfix the mountain from its rooted base,
And whelm us with the ruins! Ah, poor wretch!
The mountain shall as soon unfix itself
As he wipe off the sweat-drop from his brow,
Or make his bosom lighter by a sigh,
He is so fast impaled. His noble limbs
And spacious bulk, as tightly manacled
As a fair gazelle in the serpent's coil,
And every feature of his face grown stiff
With the hard look of agony.

PROMETHEUS. Oh, me!

SYLPH. Behold, his teeth unlock, his black lips ope,
As he would speak to us! Oh, thou sad spectacle!
PROMETHEUS. What now? Is aught forgotten?
Hath the God,
With his wise council, hatch'd some new device
To plague the rebel? Is it not enough?
Nay, be not slack; ye 're welcome:—sweet were a change,
If but a change of tortures! But to grow
A motionless rock, fast as my strong prison,
Age after age, till circling suns outnumber
The sands upon the tide-worn beach. No hope,
Or that sad mockery of hope that fools
With dull despair, spanning the infinite!
Torment unmeasurable!
SYLPH. Alas! art thou
The lofty-soul'd Prometheus?
PROMETHEUS. Ay! the fool
That dared the wrath of Jove, hated of all
That share his feasts and crouch before his throne;
The mighty seer, the wise Prometheus.
Ah, for himself not wise! Poor, poor weak slaves,
Do ye not scorn me? But I cannot shake,
Or ye might see how fearful I am grown,
That nought have more to fear!
SYLPH. Oh, fear not us!

A long, long way we come to visit thee;
To this extreme of earth
On clipping pinions borne.

For the grating of fetters,
The voice of upbraiding,
The deep, earthly groan
Of anguish half-stifled;
The ear-piercing shriek
Of pain in its sharpness,—
A concert, all tuneless, came ruffling the rose-buds,
Where sweetly we slumber'd the sultry hours;
So with pinions unsmoothed, and tresses unbraided,
Our bright feet unsandall'd, we leap'd on the air.
Like the sound of the trumpet we shook the wide ether.
A moment we quiver'd, then glancing on high,
Ascended a sun-ray, light pillar of silver,
And seem'd the gay spangles that danced in the beam.
Soon in the cool and clear expanse
Of upper air we sail'd, so fleet, so smooth,
Our feathery oars we waved not, and that flight,
Which left whole empires in its rear uncounted,
As bubbles in the wake of some swift bark,

Seem'd like a sleep of endless blessedness.
Thus floating, we arrived
At the last confines of the fair creation;
Right o'er this spot unholy,
Where tired Nature left her work half done.
Oh, how unlike those happy fields of light
Where late we voyaged! The thick, dark air,
Still pressing earthward, closes o'er our heads
With dull and leaden sound, like sleepy waters.

PROMETHEUS. Never till this day
Did life disturb the dense eternity
Of joyless quiet; never skylark's song,
Or storm-bird's prescient scream, or eaglet's cry,
Made vital the gross fog. The very light
Is but an alien that can find no welcome;
So horrible the silent solitude,
That e'en those vile artificers of wrong,
Brute instruments of ghastly cruelty,
Whose grisly faces were too fell to dream of,—
Even they seem'd comfortable when they turn'd
Their backs upon me! Oh, too bitter shame,
I could have wept to beg them tarry longer!

SYLPH. And didst thou weep? And did they leave thee thus?
Oh, pitiless slaves!

PROMETHEUS. No, I did not weep.
Fall'n as I am, I closed my eyelids hard;
They burn'd like fire, and seem'd as they were full.
But, no! the dew of tears was scorch'd away.
I did not—sure they could not see me—weep.
I bade them farewell, and my voice was firm:
I think it made them tremble, for the sound
Of their departure seem'd to shun my ear,
As they had done some perilous deed in haste,
And dared not look on it. They stole away:
The patter of their feet still fretted me,
Like drops in caves that evermore are ceasing,
Yet never cease, so long they seem'd agoing.
Methought 'twere joy to heave a groan unheard,
Unmark'd of coward scorn. Nay, do not weep,
Or I shall e'en heap shame upon my shame,
And all that yet remains of god in me
Be quench'd in tears. Alas, my gentle sprights!
But now I wish'd to glide into a stream,
And lose myself in ocean's liberty,
Leaving my empty chains a monument
And hollow trophy of the tyrant's rage;
Or be a lump of ice which you might thaw
With the kind warmth of sighs. And hard I strove
To put away my immortality,

Till my collected spirits swell'd my heart
Almost to bursting; but the strife is past.
It is a fearful thing to be a god,
And, like a god, endure a mortal's pain;
To be a show for earth and wondering heaven
To gaze and shudder at! But I will live,
That Jove may know there is a deathless soul
Who ne'er will be his subject. Yes, 'tis past.
The stedfast Fates confess my absolute will,—
Their own co-equal. I have struggled long,
And single-handed, with their triple power,
And most opposing, still been most their slave.
And yet, the will survived: Lord of itself;
Free to disclaim the foreseen forced effect
Of its free workings. Now, we are agreed,
I and my destinies. The total world,—
Above, below, whate'er is seen or known,
And all that men, and all that gods enact,
Hopes, fears, imaginations, purposes;
With joy, and pain, and every pulse that beats
In the great body of the universe,
I give to the eternal sisterhood,
To make my peace withal! And cast this husk,
This hated, mangled, and dishonour'd carcase
Into the balance; so have I redeem'd

My power, birthright, even the changeless mind,
The imperishable essence uncontroll'd.

SYLPH. Strange talk, Prometheus! Every scornful word,
And every bitter boast, may add an age
Of torture to thy doom. We would in truth
That we might melt thy fetters with our sighs!
But what we can, we will. Hold but thy peace;
Or; if thou wilt forbid us, scoff, revile,
But let us beg for thee. Our wilful prayer,
By thee forbidden, leaves thy pride unstain'd,
Thy will unmaster'd. He did love us once:
The mighty Jove did love us. Did? He does.
There is a spell of unresisted power
In wonder-working weak simplicity,
Because it is not fear'd.

PROMETHEUS. Fair creature, pause!
I am not so ungentle as to chide
The idle chirpings of imprison'd love,
That warbles freely in its narrow cage;
But I would bid the nightingale be dumb,
Or ere her amorous descant should betray
Her covert to the spoiler.

SYLPH. Spare thy fears;
For we have winning wiles and sorceries,

Such incantations as thy sterner wit
Did never dream of. Time hath been ere now
That Jove hath listen'd to our minstrelsy,
Till wrath would seem to drop out of his soul
Like a forgotten thing. Our smallest note,
Catching his ear at any breathing space
Amid his loudest threats, would make him mute
As wondering childhood. True, the fault is great,
But we are many that will plead for thee;
We and our sisters, dwellers in the streams
That murmur blithely to the joyous mood,
And dolefully to sadness. Not a nook
In darkest woods but some of us are there,
To watch the flowers, that else would die unseen.
And some there are that live among the wells
Of hidden waters in the central earth,
Or keep their state in caves where diamonds grow.
And the soft amethyst and emerald
Bask in the streamy and perpetual light
Of that mysterious stone that owes the day
No tribute for its lustre: in whose beam
A thousand gems give out their thousand hues,
As to their proper sun; not, as on earth,
By art and toil enforced. Our sisters, they,
The friendly sprites, to thee, I guess, well known,

Who show the swains where treasured fountains lie;
And those who used to guide thee in thy quest
For the earth's riches, brass and valued gold.

PROMETHEUS. I well remember, for I know you all,
Where'er ye sojourn, and whatever names
Ye are or shall be called; fairies, or sylphs,
Nymphs of the wood or mountain, flood or field:
Live ye in peace, and long may ye be free
To follow your good minds.

SYLPH. Ah, that we will!
Are we not bold to bid a god repent;
To break upon his slumbers with our prayers;
To watch him day and night; to wear him out
With endless supplication? Perhaps to beg
His kind attention to a pleasant tale;
To cheat him into pity, and conclude
Each story with Prometheus?

PROMETHEUS. Bold and rash!

SYLPH. He shall not 'scape us. Not a hold secure
In all his empire but our airy host
Shall there prevent him. If in quaint disguise
He roam the earth, or float adown the streams
To tempt or Naiad's love, or woman's eye,
Though watchful Juno were deceived, yet we
Should know him still, Ha! then should be our time.

Surprise him then, there 's nought he can refuse,
Lest we expose him to the laughing sky,
As Vulcan did the War-god. Yet no shape
Of dreadful majesty, nor sacred haunt,
Our close and passionate suit shall overawe;
For he shall hear us in the vocal gloom
Of green Dodona's leafy wilderness,
And where from all apart he oft retires
To brood upon his glory. Ours shall be
The one request that he shall ever hear
Till thou art pardon'd. Can he then be stern,
When all the praise, the sweetness of his reign,
The joy that he was glad to look upon,
The boundless ether's fitful harmony,
And the wild music of the ocean caves,
Is turn'd to sighing and importunate grief
For poor Prometheus?

PROMETHEUS. Gentle powers, forbear!
'Twere worse than all my former miseries
Should my huge wreck suck down the friendly skiff
That proffer'd aidance. Oh! that Jupiter
Had hurl'd me to the deep of Erebus,
Where neither god nor man might pity me.
Where I might be unthought of as the star
Last outpost of the bright celestial band,

That walks its circuit of a thousand years,
Shooting faint rays at black infinity.
But now shall I become a common tale,
A ruin'd fragment of a worn-out world;
Unchanging record of unceasing change,
Eternal landmark to the tide of time.
Swift generations, that forget each other,
Shall still keep up the memory of my shame
Till I am grown an unbelievëd fable.
Horsed upon hippogriffs, the hags of night
Shall come to visit me; and once an age
Some desperate wight, or wizard, gaunt and grey,
Shall seek this spot by help of hidden lore,
To ask of things forgotten or to come.
But who, beholding me, shall dare defy
The wrath of Jove? Since vain is wisdom's boast,
And impotent the knowledge that o'erleaps
The dusky bourne of time. 'Twere better far
That gods should quaff their nectar merrily,
And men sing out the day like grasshoppers,
So may they haply lull the watchful thunder.

SYLPH. Ah, happy men, whose evil destiny,
Self-baffled, falls! The fellest storm that blows,
The soonest wafts them to an endless calm.
Would we were mortal!

PROMETHEUS. Wherefore would ye so?
What coy delight awakes to sun or stars
But e'en a thought conveys you to the cradle
Of its young sweetness?

SYLPH. True; but what delight
Shall dare awake while all the spacious world
Is anguish with the terror of thy pains,
And sick for thy affliction?

PROMETHEUS. You, at least,
Have nought to fear. Your unsubstantial forms
Present no scope to the keen thunderbolt;
Nor adamant can bind your subtle essence,
Which is as fine as scent of violets,
Quick as the warbled notes of melody,
And unconfinable as thoughts of gods.
Then go your way. Forget Prometheus,
And all the woe that he is doom'd to bear;
By his own choice this vile estate preferring
To ignorant bliss and unfelt slavery.

SYLPH. Well, we will go, but never to forget
Thee, nor omit thy cause. 'Tis vain to strive,
For Jove is not one half so merciless
As thou art to thyself. But fare thee well;
Our love is all as stubborn as thy pride,
And swift as firm. For ere yon full-orb'd moon,

That now emerges from that dark confine,
And, scaling slow the steep opposed heaven,
Is red and swoln, assume her silvery veil
And high career of virgin quietness,
Shall we alight upon the topmost peak
Of Jove's Olympus.

PROMETHEUS. Ye are free to go
Where'er ye will, but not to plead for him
Whom Jove abhors. No, not to pity him,
Or ye may wish your errant range of wing
Were narrow as the evening beetle's rounds.

SYLPH. Not free to pity! What were Jove himself
If pity had not been? Was not he once
A hapless babe, condemn'd to die ere born?
But when he smiled, unweeting of his doom,
And press'd his little hand on Rhea's bosom,
Then gentle pity touch'd his mother's heart,
Till very softness made her bold to brave
The sternness of her hoary husband's ire.
Oh, we have hung upon our motionless wings,
And watch'd her bending sadly o'er his cradle,
Shading his rosy face with her dark locks
In such sweet stillness of o'ermaster'd sorrow,
As if she fear'd a sigh might wake her bird,
Or call his ruthless father to devour him.

And when at length e'en love to love gave way,
And she consented to resign her babe,
To the kind nymph who promised to conceal him,
With all a mother's tender fortitude,
She wash'd the tear-drops from his fair round cheeks
With rain from her own eyes; for she was melted,
Yet nothing shaken. Pity made her firm.
Yet when the Oread virgin turn'd away,
And he, with baby cries, stretch'd out his arms
Over her ivory shoulders, well I ween
She would have given her godhead for a heart
That might have broken. Then we sang our songs,
And soothed her melancholy thoughts with tales
How he should come to be a mighty god,
And blast his foes with fiery thunderbolts.
And day by day, in sunshine or in storm,
We posted 'twixt far Ida and Olympus
To bear her kisses to her growing babe,
And bring back daily tidings of his weal.
He was a lovely child, a boy divine;
And joy'd to listen to the gurgling music
Of Ida's many streams. We little thought
That he would prove so stern and tyrannous.

PROMETHEUS. 'Tis ever so. Full many an innocent flower

Is womb and cradle to a poisonous berry.
Mark the cub lion, stolen from its dam,
Loved playmate of the youngling foresters,
Who laugh to see it shake its maneless neck,
And lash with little tail, and beat the earth
In angry sportiveness. Wait but awhile,
That lion's roar, like the low thunder-groan,
That rumbles under foot before an earthquake,
Shall send an horrible silence o'er the waste,
That every living thing shall send away,
Like shadow'd clouds when sun and wind are striving.

SYLPH. And yet 'twas sweet to listen to his tales,
And watch the strivings of the god within him.
For all his prattle and his childishness
Were godlike, full of hope and prophecy.
And so he waxëd lusty, fair, and tall,
And added sinew changed his baby flesh,
That dimpled erst at every touch of love;
And the loose ringlets of his silky hair
Knotted in crisper curls. His deepening voice
Told like a cavern'd oracle the fall
Of sky-throned dynasties. He grew, and grew,
A star-bright sign of fated empery;
And all conspiring omens led him on
To lofty purpose and pre-eminence.

The mountain eagles, towering in their pride,
Stoop'd at his beck and flock'd about his path,
Like the small birds by wintry famine tamed;
Or with their dusky and expansive wings
Shaded and fann'd him as he slept at noon.
The lightnings danced before him sportively,
And shone innocuous as the pale cold moon
In the clear blue of his celestial eye.
Oft the nigh thunder-clap, o'er Ida's peak,
Chiding the echoes that bemock'd it, paused,
And with a low abasëd voice did homage
To its predestined Lord. But more than all,
With no ambiguous sign, the gifted Themis,
Thy mother, O Prometheus! pointed out
The very spot—a lovely spot it was,
Untrodden then, and wild, without a sound,
Save old Æsopus and his lovely song,
Where the glad sons of the deliver'd earth
Shall yearly raise the multitudinous voice,
Hymning great Jove, the God of Liberty!
Then he grew proud, yet gentle in his pride,
And full of tears, which well became his youth,
As showers do spring. For he was quickly moved,
And joy'd to hear sad stories that we told
Of what we saw on earth, of death and woe,

And all the waste of time. Then would he swear
That he would conquer time; that in his reign
It never should be winter; he would have
No pain, no growing old, no death at all.
And that the pretty damsels, whom we said
He must not love, for they would die and leave him,
Should evermore be young and beautiful;
Or, if they must go, they should come again,
Like as the flowers did. Thus he used to prate,
Till we almost believed him. Oft at eve
We sang the glories of the coming age,
And oft surprised the wanderer in the woods
With bodements sweet of immortality.

PROMETHEUS. Aye, ye were blest with folly. Who may tell
What strange conceits upon the earth were sown
And gender'd by the fond garrulity
Of your aëreal music? Scatter'd notes,
Half heard, half fancied by the erring sense
Of man, on which they fell like downy seeds
Sown by autumnal winds, grew up, and teem'd
With plenteous madness. Legends marvellous
Of golden ages past, and dreams as wild,
As sweetly wild, of that auspicious birth,
That glorious advent of delight unfading,

Which brooks, and vesper gales, and all divine
Mysterious melodies, in sleep or trance,
Or lonely musing heard, to that blind race
So oft announced. Vain phantasies and hopes,
That shall be hopes for aye, from sire to son
Descending; chaunted in a hundred tongues
By errant minstrels borne from land to land,
And in the storm-bewilder'd bark convey'd
To furthest isles, where yet unheard of man
The surges roar around. The various tribes,
Condemn'd alike to ever-present woe,
With various phantoms of futurity
Shall soothe their weary hour. Beneath the wain
Of slow Bootes, where a mimic moon,
Like fiery ensign of a spiritual host,
Flick'ring and rustling, streams along the sky;
Where the black pine-woods splinter in the blast
That rides tempestuous o'er a wilderness
Of ancient snow, whose ineffectual gleam
Thwarts the pale darkness of the long long night,
And Ocean, slumbering in his icy bed,
Hears not the shrill alarum of the storm.
There Scalds uncouth, in horrid accents screaming,
To clash of arms and outcries terrible,
Tuning their song, shall tell of shadowy realms

Where the brave dead, the mighty of old time,
Urge the fierce hunt, the bloody banquet share,
And drink deep draught nectareous from the skulls
Of slaughter'd foes. But, in the perfumed groves,
Of the soft, languid, dreaming Orient,
And where, 'mid billowy sands, in the broad eye
Of an unprofitable, dewless heaven,
The lonely phœnix roams, shall hoary seers
And pensive shepherds, to believing maids
And meekest mothers, when their babes are hush'd,
Repeat the cherish'd tale at eventide,
Of a new world where peace shall ever dwell.
No armed hoof shall crush the daisy bold
That flaunts it in the sun, nor ambush'd foe
Invade the lurking violet in her bower,
Where beauty fades not, love is ever true,
And life immortal like a summer day.
Oh! happy creatures that, uncursed with love,
Look for a land they know not where, but deem
It may be girdled by the burning waste,
Or safely treasured in the secret ocean;
Or, haply, in the moon, where they shall live
Beneath the sole and everlasting sway
Of him, the babe benign, mighty and wise,
Whose might and wisdom are but innocence

And childish simpleness. Thrice happy they
Who ne'er have found and never can believe
That innocence is mere defect of might—
Simplicity the very craft of Nature,
To hide the piteous void of ignorance,
Till guile is grown of age. Too soon 'tis seen
The great are ever best when least themselves.
The weakest wind that wantons with your curls,
Grown strong would be a scouring hurricane.

SYLPH. Alas! thy words are like this spot, unholy.
Thou could'st not speak them in a better place.

PROMETHEUS. What place so holy where they are not true?
Ye see no tumult in the host of stars,
No taint of falsehood in the clear blue sky.
Yet there was ancient Uranus enthroned
And treason impious, foul, unnatural,
O'erwhelm'd his stellar and primeval seat
With horror and with shame.

SYLPH. And pleasant hills were those
Where the vast brood of Titan used to dwell,
Bathing their golden locks in morning light,
And sunn'd with even's latest, sweetest smile—
Her parting smile that bids the earth adieu.
Where are they gone, that giant brotherhood,

Lords of the mountains?

Past like clouds away,

And seen no more—save when their misty shades,
Among the lonely peaks they loved so well,
Far off beheld, astound the mountaineer.

PROMETHEUS. Ay, they are gone; and he that holds their place

Is like them, strong and blind. What wonder, then,
Though he fall mightily?

SYLPH. The tale is told

Of Uranus and old Hyperion,
And that great mother: huge and sluggish powers
That just awoke from their eternal sleep
To gaze upon the new and vacant world,
Then sank to sleep again. And glad were we
When Saturn and his howling train were sent
To fright their slumbers in the nether void.
But must the youthful thunder-wielder fall,
For whom we sung the song of victory?
Fall from his high, his unapproached throne,
Which never god may touch, nor mortal eye
Pierce through the veil of congregated clouds,
That wave on wave, a dark and soundless sea,
Beneath it ebb and flow? Thus islanded,
It hangs enshrined in clear and crystal air,

And owns no kindred with the lower orb.
Oft have we seen that solitary height,
As gay we glanced athwart the sunny beam,
And wash'd our pinions in the unfall'n dew,
And thought no peril and no change were there.

PROMETHEUS. 'Tis a fair spot, and holy. I have known,
When Rhea's boy hath wonder'd what it was,
That other silver star that staid behind,
When Phosphor left the sky. Yet now he deems
His godhead as the light immutable,
That cares not whether it be morn or even.

SYLPH. There is a dark foreboding in thy speech;
Thine eyes flash fearfully a moody joy
That argues a new downfall. Whence arise
These desperate hopes, that seem to make thee fond
Of lowest misery?

PROMETHEUS. I know it all—
All ye would ask. But ne'er shall hope be mine
Till the dread secret works its fatal will
In daylight visible, with wrath and scorn,
And ceaseless memory of forgotten things.
Then Jove shall learn what all his sulphurous bolts,
Soul-piercing torments, earthquakes, fiery plagues,
Disease, and hateful, black deformity,

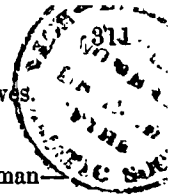
And all confounding shame, shall ne'er persuade
My voice to utter.

* * * *

CONCLUSION.

Ye patient fields, rejoice!
The blessing that ye pray for silently
Is come at last; for ye shall no more fade,
Nor see your flow'rets droop like famishing babes
Upon your comfortless breasts. Close, pent-up woods!
Open your secrets to the prying sun;
For den nor forest dark shall longer hide
The noisome thing. Take heart, poor flutterer!
Nor fear the glitter of the serpent's eye:
No more it shines to harm thee. Sing aloud,
Toss high the shrillness of thy gurgling throat,
And wake the silence of Olympian bowers,
That Jove may hear thee—he, the lovely boy,
The son of Saturn, mightier than his sire,
And gentler far. Thou hollow earth! resound,
And, like the maddening drum of Cybele,
Roll with delight thro' all thy sparry caves
A many-echoed peal. And, oh! ye soft
And wandering elements—ye sighing floods—

And thou, great treasury of light and music—
Embracing air with all your wealth of sounds,
And bodiless hues, and shadows glorified,
Of what on earth is terrible and fair
The fairer effluence and the living form,
With all your music, loud and lustily,
With every dainty joy of sight and smell,
Prepare a banquet meet to entertain
The Lord of Thunder, that hath set you free
From old oppression. Melancholy brook!
That creep'st along so dull and drowsily,
Wailing and waiting in the lazy noon,
In merry madness roar, and whirl, and bound,
Blithe as thy mountain sisters. Ne'er again
Shall summer drought, or icy manacle,
Obstruct thy tuneful liberty. Thou breeze,
That mak'st an organ of the mighty sea,
Obedient to thy wilful phantasies,
Provoke him not to scorn; but soft and low,
As pious maid awakes her aged sire,
On tiptoe stealing, whisper in his ear
The tidings of the young god's victory.
Then shall he rouse him on his rocky bed,
And join the universal hymn with strains
Of solemn thankfulness and deep delight—



The blended sweetness of a thousand waves.
But where is he, the voice intelligent
Of Nature's minstrelsy? Oh, where is man—
That mortal god, that hath no mortal kin
Or like on earth? Shall Nature's orator—
The interpreter of all her mystic strains—
Shall he be mute in Nature's jubilee?
Wilt thou be last in bliss and benison
That wast the first in lamentable wail,
And sole in conscious pain? Haply he fears
The bitter doom, that out of sweetness makes
Its sad memorial. Mortal! fear no more,—
The reign is past of ancient violence;
And Jove hath sworn that time shall not deface,
Nor death destroy, nor mutability
Perplex the truth of love.

SKETCHES OF ENGLISH POETS.

IN RHYMES.

THESE sketches were written by the Author on the fly-leaves and covers of his copy of Anderson's British Poets. Unfortunately, the volume containing Pope was missing, which occasions a break in the series. The idea appears to have been taken from Addison's "Account of the greatest English Poets," a youthful composition addressed by him to Mr. Henry Sacheverell, April 3, 1694, in the twenty-second year of his age. The following extract from this poem will show the likeness and difference between the original and the imitation, if such it is to be considered.

Long had our dull forefathers slept supine,
Nor felt the rapture of the tuneful nine,
Till Chaucer first, a merry bard, arose,
And many a story told in rhyme and prose.
But age has rusted what the poet writ,
Worn out his language, and obscur'd his wit.
In vain he jests in his unpolish'd strain,
And tries to make his readers laugh in vain.
Old Spenser next, warm'd with poetic rage,
In ancient tales amus'd a barbarous age;
An age that, yet uncultivate and rude,
Where'er the poet's fancy led, pursued
Through pathless fields and unfrequented floods,
To dens of dragons and enchanted woods.
But now the mystic tale that pleas'd of yore,
Can charm an understanding age no more.
The long-spun allegories fulsome grow,
While the dull moral lies too plain below.
We view, well-pleased, at distance all the sights
Of arms and palfries, battles, fields, and fights,
And damsels in distress, and courteous knights;
But when we look too near, the shades decay,
And all the pleasing landscape fades away.

CHAUCER.

How wayward oft appears the poet's fate,
Who still is born too early or too late.
If a bold, fond, imaginative age,
Instinct with amorous, or with martial rage,
Enact more wonders than the mind conceives,
And all that fancy can devise believes,—
If such an age behold a bard, whose sight
Looks on earth's objects by a heaven-born light,
Skill'd to pourtray each lineament of nature,
And shed purpureal grace on every feature,
The fleeting language, to its trust untrue,
Vext by the jarring claims of old and new,
Defeats his beauty, makes his sense the fee
Of a blind, guessing, blundering glossary.
Thus CHAUCER, quaintly clad in antique guise,
With unfamiliar mien scares modern eyes.
No doubt he well invented—nobly felt—
But then, O Lord! how monstrously he spelt.

His syllables perplex our critic men,
Who try in vain to find exactly ten;
And waste much learning to reduce his songs
To modish measurement of shorts and longs.
His language, too, unpolish'd and unfixt,
Of Norman, Saxon, Latin, oddly mixt—
Such words might please th' uneducated ears
That hail'd the blaring trumpets of Poictiers.
They shared the sable Edward's glee and glory,
And, like his conquests, they were transitory.
Then how shall such unpolish'd lingo cope
With polish'd elegance and Mister Pope?

Yet, ancient Bard! let not our judgment wrong
Thy rich, spontaneous, many-colour'd song;
True mirror of a bold, ambitious age,
In passion furious, in reflection sage!—
An age of gorgeous sights and famous deeds,
And virtue more than peace admits or needs;
When shiver'd lances were our ladies' sport,
And love itself assumed a lofty port;
When every beast, and bird, and flower, and tree,
Convey'd a meaning and a mystery;
And men in all degrees, sorts, ranks, and trades,
Knights, Palmers, Scholars, Wives, devoted Maids,

In garb, and speech, and manners, stood confest
To outward view, by hues and signs exprest,
And told their state and calling by their vest.

SPENSER.

SWEET was the youth of virgin Poesy,
That virgin sweetness which she gave to thee,
My SPENSER, bard of happy innocence!
For thou didst with a bridegroom's love intense
Caress the fair inventions of thy brain,
Those babes of paradise, without the pain
Of mortal birth, to fairest heritage
Born in the freshness of their perfect age.
Thy Faery Knight had all the world in fee,
For all the world was Faeryland to thee.
Thine is no tale, once acted, then forgot;
Thy creatures never were, and never will be not.
Oh! look not for them in the dark abyss
Where all things have been, and where nothing is—
The spectral past;—nor in the troubled sea
Where all strange fancies are about to be—

The unabiding present. Seek them where
For ever lives the Good, the True, the Fair,
In the eternal silence of the heart.
There Spenser found them ; thence his magic art
Their shades evoked in feature, form, and limb,
Real as a human self, and bright as cherubim.
And what though wistful love and emulous arms,
And all the wizard might of mutter'd charms,—
Though slimy snakes disgorge their loathly rage,
And monstrous phantoms wait on Archimage :
These are but dreams, that come, and go, and peep
Through the thin curtain of a morning sleep,
And leave no pressure on the soul, that wakes
And hails the glad creation that it makes.

SHAKESPEARE.

SHAKESPEARE, what art thou? Could'st thou rise again
To praise thyself, thy praise were old and vain;
Thy highest flight would sink beneath thy due;
Thy own invention would find nothing new.
In the whole orb of nature that thou art,
Complete in essence, and distinct in part;
No theme, no topic, and no simile,
But busy men have stolen in praise of thee.
Then let thy cumbrous critics keep their shelves;
We find thy truest comment in ourselves.
In thee our thoughts find utterance, and combine
Their airy substance with those thoughts of thine.
By thee our feelings all are judged, acquitted,
Reproved, condemn'd, with seemly action fitted.
What chance, or change, affection, or the faith
Of hope and fear, the benison or scathe
Of Fortune infinite can make of man,—
What man has been since first the world began,

Thou well hast shown. One task alone remains,
One great adventure for succeeding brains;
The golden branch upon the mystic tree,
Unpluck'd, to show—man as he ought to be.

DRAYTON.

HAIL to thee, DRAYTON! true, pains-taking wight,
So various that 'tis hard to praise thee right;
For driest fact and finest faery fable
Employ'd thy genius indefatigable.
What bard more zealous of our England's glory,
More deeply versed in all her antique story,
Recorded feat, tradition quaint and hoary?
What muse like thine so patiently would plod
From shire to shire in pilgrim sandal shod,
Calling to life and voice, and conscious will,
The shifting streamlet and the sluggish hill?
Great genealogist of earth and water,
The very Plutarch of insensate matter.

DONNE.

Brief was the reign of pure poetic truth;
A race of thinkers next, with rhymes uncouth,
And fancies fashion'd in laborious brains,
Made verses heavy as o'erloaded wains.
Love was their theme, but love that dwelt in stones,
Or charm'd the stars in their concentric zones;
Love that did first the nuptial bond conclude
'Twixt immaterial form and matter rude;
Love that was riddled, sphered, transacted, spelt,
Sublimed, projected, everything but felt.
Or if in age, in orders, or the cholic,
They damn'd all loving as a heathen frolic;
They changed their topic, but in style the same,
Adored their Maker as they would their dame.
Thus Donne, not first, but greatest of the line,
Of stubborn thoughts a garland thought to twine;

To his fair maid brought cabalistic posies,
And sung quaint ditties of metempsychosis;
Twists iron pokers into true love-knots,
Coining hard words, not found in polyglots.

DANIEL.

Not such was Daniel, gentle, bland, and good,
The wisest monitor of womanhood;
Plain morals utter'd in plain mother tongue,
And flat historic facts he plainly sung.
And yet by earnest faith bestow'd a grace
On bald event and ancient common-place.
The oldest truths to him were ever new;
No wonder, for he always felt them true.
The bootless battles of the red and white,
Which few can read, he patiently could write.

DRYDEN.

THEN DRYDEN came, a mind of giant mould,
Like the north wind, impetuous, keen, and cold;
Born to effect what Waller but essay'd,
In rank and file his numbers he array'd,
Compact as troops exact in battle's trade.
Firm by constraint, and regularly strong,
His vigorous lines resistless march along,
By martial music order'd and inspired,
Like glowing wheels by their own motion fired.
So as a nation long inured to arms,
And stirring strains, fierce pleasures, brisk alarms,
Disdains a calm, and can no longer bear
A soft, a pensive, or a solemn air;
Thus Dryden taught the English to despise
The simply sweet, long-lingering melodies
That lovely Spenser and his thoughtful peers
Had warbled erst to rapt attentive ears.
E'en Milton's billowy ocean of high sound,

Delighted little, though it might astound;
The restless crowd impatient turn'd away,
And sought a shorter, shriller, lighter lay.
Yet Dryden nobly earn'd the poet's name,
And won new honours from the gift of fame.
His life was long, and when his head was grey,
His fortune broken, and usurp'd his bay,
His dauntless genius own'd no cold dismay;
Nor in repining notes of vain regret
He made his crack'd pipe pitifully fret.
But when cashier'd and laid upon the shelf,
To shame the court excell'd his former self,
Who meant to clip, but imp'd his moulted wings,
And cured him of his ancient itch of praising kings.
He sat gigantic on the shore of time,
And watch'd the ingress of encroaching slime,
Nor dream'd how much of evil or of good
Might work amid the far unfathom'd flood.

DRYDEN'S SUCCESSORS.

Sad were the times in Dryden's latter day,
He saw all genius but his own decay;
Poor Otway starved, and Lee in misery dead,
The laurel torn from his own hoary head,
Like a frail father, he was doom'd to trace
His vices only in his spurious race;
For many a rhymer claim'd him for a sire,
With all his soot and less than half his fire.
Their boast to reconcile—a vain pretence—
The old antipathy of wit and sense.
To write in rhyme as men might write in prose,
And win the frigid praise of critic beaux.
But though their general theme was worldly man,
Small was their skill the living heart to scan;
Their fancy little and their wisdom less,
No inward truth their flippant lines express;
No image to the inward eye convey,
Reveal no secret impulse to the day.

Action or passion there were seldom found,
Or the sweet magic of heart-stirring sound.
Smooth was their verse indeed; their turns were nice,
Quick, neat, exact, as if they moved on ice;
They skimm'd the surface of the chilling town,
And sought from courts and clubs a brief renown.

PARNELL.

A GENTLE wit was pure, polite PARNELL,
By many praised, for many loved him well.
His muse glides on " with gentle swimming walk,"
And e'en while singing only seems to talk.
In fact she is an English gentlewoman,
Whom no one would believe a thing uncommon,
Till by experience taught, we find how rare
Such truly English gentlewomen are.

SWIFT.

First in the list behold the caustic Dean,
Whose muse was like himself compact of spleen;
Whose sport was ireful, and whose laugh severe,
His very kindness cutting, cold, austere.

YOUNG AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

'Tis sad to think, of all the names that strive
For immortality, how few survive;
How many leave preferment's open ways,
Smit by the love of hard-earn'd, barren praise,
Defying poverty, and worldly blame,
And self-reproach, to win the puff of fame;
Unhappy breathe, and unregarded rot,
First starved to death, and soon as dead forgot.

Eternal laurels shall the bust entwine
Of YOUNG at once a poet and divine.
And GRAY, while Windsor's antique towers shall stand,
Or spring revisit Britain's favour'd strand;
While those old bards whose praise he sung so well
Shall keep their place in memory's haunted cell;
While the green churchyard and the hallow'd tower
Attract your steps at eve's soft, solemn hour;
As long as men can read, or boys recite,
As long as critics sneer, and bards endite,
And lavish lords shall print their jingling stuff,
'Mid ample margin, leaving verge enough;
So long shall GRAY, and all he said and sung,
Tang the shrill accents of the school-girl's tongue;
So long his Ode, his Elegy, his Bard,
By lisping prodigies be drawl'd and marr'd.

For LITTELTON, he gain'd the name of poet;
But, made a lord, might easily forego it.

WEST tried to soar on Pindar's ample pinion,
And bring his strains beneath our king's dominion.
All praise to him for what he well intended;
Of his success least said the soonest mended.

MOORE, CAWTHORNE, CUNNINGHAM, and BROWN and GREEN,
Not much remember'd nor forgotten clean,
Of Britain's poets swell the lengthy list,
Scarce mark'd if present, nor if absent miss'd.

BOYCE, sad example of the poet's lot,
His faults remember'd and his verse forgot,
From cold contempt a morsel doom'd to crave,
And owe to public charity a grave.
In want's worst miseries ran his woeful race,
And all his fame was but proclaim'd disgrace.
Peace to his dust, and may his ashes soar
Where mortal frailty shall beset no more;
Where want shall never tempt to deeds of shame,
And Heaven's pure light shall cleanse the tainted name!

CHURCHILL, by want and rage impell'd to write,
Whose muse was anger, and whose genius spite,
With satire meant to stab, and not to heal,
The morbid, bloated, feverish commonweal;
Too proud to yield to humble virtue's rule,
Smote half the world with reckless ridicule.

Wit, honour, sense, to him did Heaven impart,
But not that last, best gift, a pious heart.
He blazed awhile in fortune, fame, and pride,
But unrespected lived, untimely died.

But gentler GOLDSMITH, whom no man could hate,
Beloved by Heaven, pursued by wayward fate,
Whose verse shall live in every British mind,
Though sweet, yet strong; though nervous, yet refined;—
A motley part he play'd in life's gay scene,
The dupe of vanity and wayward spleen;
Aping the world, a strange fantastic elf;
Great, generous, noble, when he was himself.

GRAINGER possess'd a true poetic vein,
But why waste numbers on a Sugar-cane?
Say, Doctor, why, since those who only need
Thy blank instructions, sure will never read?

COOPER essay'd a vein to England new,
To be the poet of refined virtù.
His muse, half French, half English, trips away,
A nymph presentable, though rather gay,
Brought up at Paris, and not half at ease
Where British morals hold their strict decrees.

But ill the gentleman supports his claim
To Gresset's wit or old Anacreon's name.

SMOLLETT and ARMSTRONG, both of Pæan's band,
Compatriot offspring of a thoughtful land,
A land severe, whose mettle yet unbroke,
Toils in the team, and yet disdains the yoke.
In mind Athenian, but in spirit still
The land of Wallace wight, and Christie's Will.*
Such then was Scotland, nor could learning, art,
Or finest genius quite subdue that heart.
So neither keenest sense nor soundest morals
Could keep her brightest sons from needless quarrels.
And oft 't would seem her literary men
Reluctant changed the claymore for the pen.
Scots were they both by temper as by birth,
And both were racy of their native earth;
But pensive ARMSTRONG, though he heir'd a name
For bloody deeds of old bequeath'd to fame,
On Liddal's banks renown'd and sands of Drife,
Was yet almost too indolent for strife.
And little of the Scot was in him seen,
Save now and then a passing fit of spleen.

* See Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, vol. III., p. 105. Second Edition.

And sure the man of whom our Thomson sung
(Thomson a Scot in nothing but his tongue)
In such a gentle strain of kind reproof,
As could be dictated by nought but love,
Could not be other than a kindly soul,
Who oft forgot the doctor o'er a bowl;
And when he spied the humming, sparkling cream
Of bright champagne, or snuff'd of punch the steam,
Even as a poet would forget his theme.

Yet in his graver mood he lectured well
On ills which haply oft himself befell.
And with small practice, but with some small wealth,
He turn'd to stately verse the Art of Health;
And justly earn'd a lofty place among
The masters of the blank didactic song.
Correct his judgment, he knew where to stop,
And smells by no means often of the shop.
Yea, though a learn'd disciple of St. Luke,
He never once alludes to purge or puke;
Nor with hard words of most portentous omen
Describes the thorax, pelvis, or abdomen.

WILKIE, DODSLEY, &c.

WILKIE, the Scottish Homer, so 'tis said;
I will not censure what I never read.
Had Homer been a chief of merry Tweeddale,
And had his trumpet been an old Scotch fiddle,
His Pegasus a shuffling Scotland pad,
He then had wrote the Epigoniad.

Good DODSLEY, honest, bustling, hearty soul,
A footman, verse-man, prose-man, bibliopole;
A menial first beneath a lady's roof,
Then Mercury to guttling Dartineuf,
His humble education soon complete,
He learnt good things to write, good things to eat.
Then boldly enter'd on the buskin'd stage,
And show'd how toys may help to make us sage:
Nay, dared to bite the great with satire's tooth,
And made a Miller tell his King the truth.
In tragic strain he told Cleone's woes,
The touching sorrows and the madd'ning throes

Of a fond mother and a faithful wife.
He wrote "The Economy of Human Life."
For flights didactic then his lyre he strung,
Made rhymes on Preaching, and blank verse on Dung;
Anon with soaring weary, much at his ease,
Wrote Epigrams, and Compliments, and Kisses.
All styles he tried, the tragic, comic, lyric,
The grave didactic and the keen satiric;
Now preach'd and taught as sober as a dominie,
Now went pindaric-mad about Melpomene;
Now tried the pastoral pipe and oaten stop,
Yet all the while neglected not his shop.
Fair be his fame, among a knavish clan
His noblest title was an honest man.
A bookseller, he robb'd no bard of pelf,
No bard he libell'd, though a bard himself.

Far other fate was thine, unhappy KIT,*
Luckless adventurer in the trade of wit.
A bitter cup was offer'd to thy lip,
Drugg'd with the wants and woes of authorship.
Untimely thrust upon this mortal stage,
No childish pastime could thy thoughts engage.

* Christopher Smart, born April 11, 1722; died May 21, 1773.

Books were thy playmates. In a happy dream
Thy hours unmark'd would glide along the stream
Of fancies numberless, and sweet, and fair;
Link'd like the notes of some voluptuous air,
For ever varying as the hues that deck
With changeful loveliness the ring-dove's neck.
Still rising, flitting, melting, blending,
For ever passing, and yet never ending.
Sweet life were this, if life might pass away
Like the soft numbers of a warbled lay;
Were man not doom'd to carefulness and toil,
A magic lamp with unconsuming oil.
Truth is a lesson of another school,
And duty sways us with a stricter rule.
The stream of life awhile that smoothest flows,
'Ere long is hurried down the stream of woes,
Or, lost in swamps of penury and shame,
Leaves the foul vapour of a tainted name.

Like fate, or worse, poor CUTHBERT,* made thy life
A woful monument to thy dead wife.
With her of virtue and of hope bereft,
Thou and thy passions in the world wert left.

* Cuthbert Shaw, born 1738 or 1739; died September 1, 1771.

True, thou hast sweetly mourn'd thy youthful bride,
But well it were if thou with her hadst died.

For LANGHORNE, Reverend let him still continue,
Although his mind had very little sinew.
'Twas his to ape our reverend ancient lays
With mincing prettiness of modern phrase,
As some fine ladies mimic in their dress
The simple finery of a shepherdess;
And shape their silks and muslins to the cut
That decks the dwellers of the mud-built hut.

SONNETS AND OTHER SHORT POEMS

ON

SCRIPTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

It was the intention of the Author to have published a series of sonnets and other short poems, exclusively on Scriptural subjects, as a Christmas present. The greater part of the pieces in the present collection were written with this design, (which, as explained in the Memoir, was never executed,) about ten or twelve years before his death. To these are now added several others, of an expressly religious character, but in which the personality of the author is less concealed. The beautiful sonnet which I have placed at the close of the series, was written in a friend's house in the year 1848; the last of his mortal life. *Respice finem.*

THE BIBLE.

How very good is God! that he hath taught
To every Christian that can hear and see
Both what he is and what he ought to be,
And how and why the saints of old have fought.
Whate'er of truth the antique sages sought,
And could but guess of his benign decree,
Is given to Faith affectionate and free,
Not wrung by force of self-confounding thought.
How many generations had gone by
'Twixt suffering Job and boding Malachi!
'Twixt Malachi and Paul—how mute a pause!
Is the book finish'd? May not God once more
Send forth a prophet to proclaim his laws
In holy words not framed by human lore?

THE LITURGY.

Oft as I hear the Apostolic voice
Speaking to God, I blame my heart so cold
That with those words, so good, so pure, and old,
Cannot repent nor hope, far less rejoice.
Yet am I glad, that not the vagrant choice,
Chance child of impulse, timid, or too bold,
The volume of the heart may dare unfold
With figured rhetoric, or unmeaning noise.
Praying for all in those appointed phrases,
Like a vast river, from a thousand fountains,
Swoll'n with the waters of the lakes and mountains,
The pastor bears along the prayers and praises
Of many souls in channel well defined,
Yet leaves no drop of prayer or praise behind.

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

"THE just shall live by faith,"—and why? That faith
By which they live is all that makes them just,
The sole antagonist to the inborn lust
And malice that subjects them to the death
Which Adam earn'd, Cain, Abel suffer'd, Seth
Bequeath'd to all his progeny; who must
Suffer the primal doom of dust to dust,
And for uncertain respite hold their breath.
Think not the faith by which the just shall live
Is a dead creed, a map correct of heaven,
Far less a feeling fond and fugitive,
A thoughtless gift, withdrawn as soon as given.
It is an affirmation and an act
That bids eternal truth be present fact.

BELIEVE AND PRAY.

BELIEVE and pray. Who can believe and pray
Shall never fail nor falter, though the fate
Of his abode, or geniture, or date,
With charms beguile or threats obstruct his way.
For free is faith and potent to obey,
And love content in patient prayer to wait,
Like the poor cripple at the Beautiful Gate,
Shall be relieved on some miraculous day.
Lord, I believe!—Lord, help mine unbelief!
If I could pray, I know that thou would'st hear;
Well were it though my faith were only grief,
And I could pray but with a contrite tear.
But none can pray whose wish is not thy will,
And none believe who are not with thee still.

SETH.

Sad was the Mother of Mankind to see
The sad fulfilment of the primitive curse;
The gentle babe she was so fond to nurse,
Her duteous Abel, that would clasp her knee,
So meekly heark'ning to the history
Of the sweet hours his parents pass'd, before
They learn'd of good and ill the fatal lore,
Or pluck'd the fruit of that forbidden tree.—
What is he now? A helpless lump of earth!
Nay, thou poor Mother, do not so distrust
The Lord, that raised thy husband from the dust,
For he shall give to thee another birth,
A holy babe, whose seed shall save his brother,
And give back Abel to their common Mother.

ENOCH.

He walk'd with God, and like the breath of prayer,
His earthly substance melted all away;
So much he loved the Lord, his mortal clay
Abolish'd quite, or blent with pervious air,
Soft as a rainbow, mix'd with things that were
And are not. Surely God did love him well,
And he loved God so much, he would not dwell
Where God was not. The world was blank and bare;
He was most wretched, for he could not love.
But the good Lord took pity on his woe:
For woe it is, with all the heart above,
To walk a heartless corpse on earth below.
He faded from the earth, and was unseen;
A thought of God was all that he had been.

ABRAHAM.

When Abram was a boy the years were long,
As ours might be, did we for every hour
Extract the good and realise the power,
And train the notes to everlasting song.
And Abram was a comely youth, and strong,
And nimbly 'mid the silky reeds he trod,
When he resolved—"the Lord shall be my God,"
And knew the only God can do no wrong.
Had he not felt that God is God alone,
As holy, as almighty, and all-seeing,—
Foul were his sin, that would with blood atone,
And court the favour of unselfish Being.
But long experience taught him God was true,
And could the life he took by grace renew.

HAGAR.

Lone in the wilderness, her child and she,
Sits the dark beauty, and her fierce-eyed boy;
A heavy burden, and no winsome toy
To such as her, a hanging babe must be.
A slave without a master—wild, not free,
With anger in her heart! and in her face
Shame for foul wrong and undeserved disgrace,
Poor Hagar mourns her lost virginity!
Poor woman, fear not—God is everywhere;
Thy silent tears, thy thirsty infant's moan,
Are known to Him, whose never-absent care
Still wakes to make all hearts and souls his own;
He sends an angel from beneath his throne
To cheer the outcast in the desert bare.

ISAAC AND REBEKAH.

THE child of promise, spared by God's command,
He grew and ripen'd, till his noon of life,
As days were then, deserved and claim'd a wife;
But she must be no toy of faithless land;
So the good steward o'er the thirsty sand
His prescient camels follows to the well,
Where the sweet daughter of old Bethuel
Supplies his need with white and courteous hand.
And oh! what meeter than a maid so fair
To be the answer to that good man's prayer?
And then how sweetly did the Spirit move her,
Without a word of maidenly delay,
Or coy petition for a farewell day,
To quit her home, and seek an unseen lover!

LEAH.

Most patient of all women, unbeloved,
Yet ever toiling for thy husband's grace,
Methinks I see thee, with thy downcast face,
Pondering on tasks that should not be reproved.
For seven long years their tents were not removed,
And Leah work'd for Jacob all the while,
And yet she hardly got a sullen smile,—
So good a wife, and mother duly proved.
Yet sore it must have been to see her mate
Rising at morn to work, and working late,
And know he work'd so hard to get another;
And yet she bore it all, in hope to be,
What her sweet offspring was, by God's decree,
The better Eve, the second Adam's mother.

MOSES IN THE BULRUSHES.

SHE left her babe, and went away to weep,
And listen'd oft to hear if he did cry;
But the great river sung his lullaby,
And unseen angels fann'd his balmy sleep.
And yet his innocence itself might keep;
The sacred silence of his slumb'rous smile
Makes peace in all the monster-breeding Nile;
For God e'en now is moving in the sweep
Of mighty waters. Little dreams the maid,
The royal maid, that comes to woo the wave
With her smooth limbs beneath the trembling shade
Of silver-chaliced lotus, what a child
Her freak of pity is ordain'd to save!
How terrible the thing that looks so mild!

Oct. 6, 1836.

ON A PICTURE OF JEPHTHAH AND HIS DAUGHTER.

BY STROZZI. IN THE POSSESSION OF J. BRANKER, ESQ.

I.

'Tis true the painter's hand can but arrest
The moment that in Nature never stays,
But fleets impatient of the baffled gaze.
Yet if that single moment be the best
Of many years, commission'd to attest
The excellence, whose beauty ne'er decays,
Let not the mute art lack a rightful praise,
That shows the lovely ever loveliest:
And thou, sweet maid! for ever keep that look:
Thou never hadst so sweet a look till now.
Read in thy father's face, as in a book,
Thy virgin doom, the irrevocable vow.
Well were it if thy father ne'er had shook
Away the doubt that hangs upon his brow.

IN CONTINUATION.

II.

What if the angry God hath made thy arm
Dread as the thunderbolt or solid fire,
Or pest obedient to his vengeful ire,
Think'st thou thy oath was like a wizard's charm,
Or hadst thou need, with proffer'd blood, to farm
Jehovah's might? It proves thy faith unsure,
Thy creed idolatrous, thy heart impure;
Thy god a greedy trafficker in harm,
Not Israel's hope. But she, thy daughter, mild,
Whose eager love and over-hasty greeting,
Has made thee murderer of thy blameless child,
Loves not the less for that unhappy greeting;—
Guiltless she dies, to save thee from the guilt
Which must be thine, though her pure blood be spilt.

RUTH.

MANY and fierce the battles that the sons
Of Jacob fought for their predestined land,
And often for their wives and little ones
With blood they stain'd the wilderness of sand;
A tale of bloodshed is their history,
And to all Christian hearts a mystery.

But in the bleakest wild is sometimes seen
A grove of palms beside an oozy spring;
There way-worn pilgrims bless the spot of green,
And the weak bird lets drop her weary wing:
Such, in the wild and waste of Bible truth,
Is the sweet story of the faithful Ruth.

RIZPAH.

Blood will have blood. Here is a grievous pest,
And Gibeon craves the blood of guilty Saul.
And what can David do? He gives not all—
One he reserves, to death resigns the rest.
Poor Rizpah, mother of a brood unbless'd,
Must see Amoni and Mephibosheth
For Israel's life to ignominious death,
Because their sire so fatally transgress'd,
Consign'd tho' guiltless. She, sad mother, staid
On her stern seat of sackcloth day by day,
And, like a statue, scared the fowls away,
'Till genial rain the thirst of earth allay'd.
Patient in grief, she won the historic Spirit,
To make immortal mention of her merit.

SOLOMON.

THEN Solomon sat on the throne as king;
So had his sire appointed:—great and least,
Hebrew and Stranger, warrior chief and priest,
With one glad shout make air, earth, rock to ring.
Ah! sons of Abraham, is it such a thing
That your old monarch is so nigh deceased?
And ye must blow your horns, as if the feast
Of the ripe harvest and the hopeful spring
Fell on one day. 'Tis well the old man dies.
The sweetest string in all the holy lyre
Cracks when the old man heaves his latest sighs,
And with his breath the highest tones expire.
Ten thousand minstrels play for Solomon—
What are they all, if David be not one?

ELIJAH.

A LITTLE cake he ask'd for, that was all;
And that she gave—'twas all she had to give
To the poor hungry Prophet fugitive;
Not knowing quite, she yet believed the call,
And she was blest. Within her cottage wall,
By day the Prophet prays, at night he lies,
Whose prayer and presence daily multiplies
The meat and cruse that, let what will befal,
Shall still suffice for each successive day.
She gave a little, and she gave enough,
And taught us how to use the passive stuff
That earth affords,—to give and still to pray.
Hope be the Prophet, and the cruse Content!
Where Hope abides the cruse shall ne'er be spent.

THE JEWISH CAPTIVES.

By the smooth streams of haughty Babylon
The Jewish Captives sat them down and wept,—
Wept for their king, their country, and their home.
Jerusalem's remembrance, duly kept,
Shadow'd the aspect of a beauteous land,
Darken'd the sun, and ruffled the soft waves;
But chiefly sorrow'd the unhappy band
At the rude taunts of unbelieving slaves.
"Sing us a song!" cried they, "a song of mirth!"
How could they plume the wing and soar on high,
Forgetful of their sorrow's recent birth,
The dread fulfilment of each prophecy?
Ah no! Jerusalem, they remember'd thee,
And could not touch the harp in thy adversity.

EZRA, III., 11—13.

HARK! what a shout! Alas! it sounds but thin,
Though the sad remnant like one man unite,
And the lorn widow brings her widow's mite.
Few are the tribes, and feeble is their din,
Subdued with memory of ancestral sin,
Opprest with conscience of a guilty fear
And faint distrust, and hope but half sincere,
That asks the end before they well begin
The holy renovation. Drear the tone
Of joyous hymns in trembling accents piped;
And faces stain'd with selfish tears unwiped,
Ill emulate the upturn'd look that shone
In God's own light, what time the Cherubim
Made the first Temple's gilded glory dim.

CHRISTMAS.

Now the day of joy is come,
Let 's be joyful all and some;
We were waked to life
By the thrilling fife,
And the dub-a-dub of the rumbling drum.
Through the twists and the turns of the winding horn
The news is loud sounded—The Mighty is born!
The Mighty to conquer—the Mighty to save!
Here 's a health to all friends on the land or the wave!

But she that bare Him, where was she
At this bright time of jollity?
Virgin mother—Virgin bride,
With her Baby by her side;
There she lies on musty straw,
In crazy stall, by many a flaw
Of many a winter, drill'd and holed,
Weak, and comfortless, and cold;

With no sister, and no mother,
Aunt, or female friend, to soothe her.

Only he, ordain'd to wed,
And never take her to his bed,
Yet her husband and defender,
Watches nigh to cheer and tend her.
Mary—mother undefiled,
She smiles and weeps on her mysterious Child.
Not of her unheard, I guess,
When her mother's pains were blending
With the mother's blessedness,
Hymns of angels, low descending,
Through the abysmal depth of sky—
Peace be to men on earth, glory to God on high.
She lifted up her thankful eyes,
Yet all her thanks were sobs and sighs;
And ever with a pensive grace
She gazes on her Baby's face;
And ever and anon she sighs,
And weeps awhile, and then she prays,
And looks upon her Babe with downcast gaze,
As if she knew the wee thing by her side
Must be despised, and spit upon, and crucified!

Watching shepherds have had warning
Of the sweet and gracious morning;
They leave their lambs upon the sod,
And come to see the Lamb of God.
The Baby smiles—He cannot speak,
For He is as mute and weak
As any other son of man;—
He smiles, and that is all He can.
But, lowly shepherds, unto you 'tis given
To see what God did ne'er before disclose,
A wonder to the sagest thrones in Heaven—
Your Lord Himself, disguised in swaddling clothes.
What angels could not guess before 'twas done—
The secret lies asleep with that sweet little one.
Lowly shepherds, haste away,
Ye have done whate'er ye could;
Ye can only praise and pray,
Seek your flocks beside the wood;—
Beside the wood, and on the glimmering plain:
Lord grant ye have not seen your Lord in vain!

And now the Babe sits upright on her knee.
Calm is the mother, as a humble soul

Is ever calm when it receives a dole
Of grace, that makes it more devout and free.
But there has been a star,
That hath summon'd from afar,
Even from the farthest East, from burning realms,
Which oft the sandy tempest overwhelms;
From tribes that haply have survived the wreck
Of ancient knowledge, whom Melchisedech
Led eastward ever towards the Sun's nativity,
Up steep Himaus' height and sharp declivity,
Three venerable men,
Most reverend all, as aged men should be;
But who they were abides beyond the ken
Of Time-defeating History.
Three men there were, with frankincense and myrrh,
Knelt before Mary and entreated her,
For her sweet Infant's sake—for all
That he might be, and men might holy call,
To take their gifts of frankincense and gold.
The maiden smiled, the Baby smiled likewise;
Yet there was something in his mien and eyes,
That said—I take it as the gift of love:
Ye seek to please an infant with a toy.
So go your ways. Back to your spicy groves;
But Christ is not, for aye, a baby boy:

I do not love your incense or your gold,
Like the sweet welcome from the shepherds' fold.

But since that maiden mother, meek,
Within a little, little week,
Such strange adventures had to bear,
So fearful strange,—she did not dare
To ask of God, or her own heart
What holy truth they might impart:
And since the tears were still in Mary's eyes
Till her blest Son received her in the skies,—
Let not the hearts, whose sorrow cannot call
This Christmas merry, slight the festival:
Let us be merry that may merry be,
But let us not forget that many mourn;
The smiling Baby came to give us glee,
But for the weepers was the Saviour born.

SIMEON.

In the huge temple, deck'd by Herod's pride,
Who fain would bribe a God he ne'er believed,
Kneels a meek woman, that hath once conceived,
Tho' she was never like an earthly bride.
And yet the stainless would be purified,
And wash away the stain that yet was none,
And for the birth of her immaculate Son
With the stern rigour of the law complied:
The duty paid received its due reward
When Simeon bless'd the Baby on her arm;
And though he plainly told her that a sword
Must pierce her soul, she felt no weak alarm,
For that for which a Prophet thank'd the Lord
Once to have seen, could never end in harm.

JESUS PRAYING.

LUKE VI. 12.

HE sought the mountain and the loneliest height,
For He would meet his Father all alone,
And there, with many a tear and many a groan,
He strove in prayer throughout the long, long night.
Why need He pray, who held by filial right,
O'er all the world alike of thought and sense,
The fullness of his Sire's omnipotence?
Why crave in prayer what was his own by might?
Vain is the question,—Christ was man in deed,
And being man, his duty was to pray.
The Son of God confess'd the human need,
And doubtless ask'd a blessing every day.
Nor ceases yet for sinful man to plead,
Nor will, till heaven and earth shall pass away.

BUT JESUS SLEPT.

"But Jesus slept." The inland sea was wild,
And the good son of Mary was asleep,
For sleep He did, an infant meek and mild,
When fain He would, and fain He would not weep;
As peevish, fond, as any other child,
Close to the Virgin breast He long'd to creep,
And feel the warmth of mother undefiled.
And now the Shepherd of the chosen sheep,
Doth He not watch? Oh, vain and faithless guest!
He slept a man,—but, lo! He wakes our God!
What man is this, at whose almighty nod
The winds are still, and every wave at rest?
'Tis He whose seeming sleep approves our faith,
But ever wakes to save us from the death.

SUNDAY.

Thou blessed day! I will not call thee last,
Nor Sabbath,—last nor first of all the seven,
But a calm slip of intervening heaven,
Between the uncertain future and the past;
As in a stormy night, amid the blast,
Comes ever and anon a truce on high,
And a calm lake of pure and starry sky
Peers through the mountainous depth of clouds amass'd.

Sweet day of prayer! e'en they whose scrupulous dread
Will call no other day, as others do,
Might call thee Sunday without fear or blame;
For thy bright morn deliver'd from the dead
Our Sun of Life, and will for aye renew
To faithful souls the import of thy name.

The ancient Sabbath was an end,—a pause,—
A stillness of the world; the work was done!
But ours commemorates a work begun.
Why, then, subject the new to antique laws?
The ancient Sabbath closed the week, because
The world was finish'd. Ours proclaims the sun,
Its glorious saint, alert its course to run.
Vanguard of days! escaped the baffled jaws

Of slumberous dark and death,—so fitly first
Is Sunday placed before the secular days;
Unmeetly clad in weeds, with arms reversed,
To trail in sullen thought by silent ways.
Like the fresh dawn, or rose-bud newly burst,
So let our Sabbath wear the face of praise!

THE SOUL.

Is not the body more than meat? The soul
Is something greater than the food it needs.
Prayers, sacraments, and charitable deeds,
They realise the hours that onward roll
Their endless way "to kindle or control."
Our acts and words are but the pregnant needs
Of future being, when the flowers and weeds,
Local and temporal, in the vast whole
Shall live eternal. Nothing ever dies!
The shortest smile that flits across a face,
Which lovely grief hath made her dwelling-place,
Lasts longer than the earth or visible skies!
It is an act of God, whose acts are truth,
And vernal still in everlasting youth.

PRAYER.

Be not afraid to pray—to pray is right.
Pray, if thou canst, with hope; but ever pray,
Though hope be weak, or sick with long delay;
Pray in the darkness, if there be no light.
Far is the time, remote from human sight,
When war and discord on the earth shall cease;
Yet every prayer for universal peace
Avails the blessed time to expedite.
Whate'er is good to wish, ask that of Heaven,
Though it be what thou canst not hope to see:
Pray to be perfect, though material leaven
Forbid the Spirit so on earth to be;
But if for any wish thou darest not pray,
Then pray to God to cast that wish away.

PRIVILEGES.

Good is it to be born in Christian land,
Within the hearing of sweet Sabbath bells,
To con our letters in the book that tells
How God vouchsafed His creatures to command.
How once He led His chosen by the hand,
Presenting to their young and opening sense
Such pictures of His dread Omnipotence,
We all could see, though none might understand.
Oh! good it is to dwell with Christian folk,
Where even the blind may see, the deaf may hear,
The words that Paul hath wrote, that Jesus spoke,
By book or preacher shown to eye or ear,
Where Gospel truth is rife as song of birds—
"Familiar in our ears as household words."

FAITH—HOW GUARDED.

Yes, thou dost well, to arm thy tender mind
With all that learning, and stern common sense
Living hath spoke, or dying left behind;
To blank the frowardness of pert pretence
With long experience of a mighty mind,
That, daring to explore the truth immense,
Subsided in a faithful reverence
Of the best Catholic hope of human kind.
Yes, thou dost well to build a fence about
Thine inward faith, and mount a stalwart guard
Of answers, to oppose invading doubt.
All aids are needful, for the strife is hard;
But still be sure the truth within to cherish,—
Truths long besieged too oft of hunger perish.

STAY WHERE THOU ART.

STAY where thou art, thou canst not better be,
For thou art pure and noble as thou 'rt sweet,
And thy firm faith still working, will complete
A lovely picture of the Deity.
For 'tis in thee, mild maid, and such as thee,
Whose goodness would make any features fair,
I find the hope that bids me not despair,
But know there is a Saviour even for me.
May God in mercy from thy knowledge hide
All but the path in which thou art advancing.
For evil things there are, on either side,
Dark flames on one, like antic demons dancing,
And on the left a desert waste and wide,
Where is no chart, no compass, and no guide.

PSALM XCI. v. 1.

WHERE is that secret place of the Most High?
And who is He? Where shall we look for Him
That dwelleth there? Between the cherubim,
That o'er the seat of grace, with constant eye,
And outspread wing, brood everlastingly?
Or shall we seek that deeper meaning dim,
And as we may, walk, flutter, soar, and swim,
From deep to deep of the void, fathomless sky?
Oh! seek not there the secret of the Lord
In what hath been, or what may never be;
But seek the shadow of the mystic word—
The shadow of a truth thou canst not see:
There build thy nest, and, like a nestling bird,
Find all thy safety in thy secresy.

ISAIAH XLVI. v. 9.

WHEN I consider all the things that were,
And count them upwards from the general flood,
The tricks of fraud, and violent deeds of blood,
Weigh down the heart with sullen, dull despair;
I well believe that Satan, Prince of Air,
Torments to ill the pleasurable feeling;
But ever and anon a breeze of healing
Proclaims that God is always everywhere.
'Twas hard to see Him in the times of old,
And harder still to see our God to-day;
For prayer is slack, and love, alas! is cold,
And Faith a wanderer, weak and wide astray:
Who hath the faith, the courage, to behold
God in the judgments that have pass'd away?

THE CHURCH.

Oh! do not think I slight, or scorn, or hate
The zeal wherewith ye view the strong and vast
Dominion of the Church in ages past,
And giant splendour of her huge estate;
For in her outward semblance she was great,—
A mighty mansion, fit to entertain
All nations, whom the mountain or the plain,
Or Nature, in the length of time, could generate.
Ye wish, I know, we could as one unite,
And have a Church as ample as the sky,
Whence every Church might draw its whole of light,
And not divide, but only multiply.
Good is your purpose; but, ye English youth,
[Mistake ye not the symbol for the truth?]

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES.

YEA, we do differ, differ still we must,
For language is the type of thought, and thought
The slave of sense; and sense is only fraught
With cheques and tokens taken upon trust,
Not for their worth but promise. Earth is all
One mighty parable of Hell and Heaven.
The portion we can read at best is small;
'Tis little that we know, and if befal
That faith do wander, like the restless raven,
That rather chose without an aim to roam
O'er the blank world of waters, than to seek
In the one sacred ark, a duteous home,
May good be with it! Yet the bird so meek,
The missive dove, that ne'er begrudged her pain,
But duly to the ark return'd again,
And brought at last the promise and the pledge
Of peace, hath won a dearer privilege,—

To be of birds the most beloved—of maids
To be the emblem—the security
Of mother's love and wedded purity !
And see the mystic dove that sinks and fades
In unreflected light on Jordan river,
Upon the Mighty Sin Forgiver !
Sweet dove, sweet image of the faith that rests
All doubts, all questions past,
In babe-like love at last,
With that dear Babe divine, between the Virgin's breasts.

Yes, we do differ when we most agree,
For words are not the same to you and me.
And it may be our several spiritual needs
Are best supplied by seeming different creeds.
And differing, we agree in one
Inseparable communion,
If the true life be in our hearts—the faith,
Which not to want is death ;
To want is penance; to desire
Is purgatorial fire ;
To hope, is paradise ; and to believe
Is all of Heaven that earth can e'er receive.

WYTHEBURN CHAPEL AND HOSTEL.

HERE, traveller, pause and think, and duly think
What happy, holy thoughts may heavenward rise,
Whilst thou and thy good steed together drink
Beneath this little portion of the skies.

See! on one side, a humble house of prayer,
Where Silence dwells, a maid immaculate,
Save when the Sabbath and the priest are there,
And some few hungry souls for manna wait.

Humble it is and meek and very low,
And speaks its purpose by a single bell;
But God Himself, and He alone, can know
If spiry temples please Him half so well.

Then see the world, the world in its best guise,
  Inviting thee its bounties to partake;
Dear is the Sign's old time-discolour'd dyes,
  To weary trudger by the long black lake.

And pity 'tis that other studded door,
  That looks so rusty right across the way,
Stands not always as was the use of yore,
  That whoso passes may step in and pray.

ON THE CONSECRATION OF A SMALL CHAPEL.

I.

THERE was a little spot of level ground,
For many an age unmark'd by casual eyes,
Bleak hills afar and sinuous banks around,
And terraced gardens, gradual mound on mound,
With every season's sweet variety.
And there uprose an house devote to God,
As lowly as befits a house of prayer ;
Yet large enough to sanctify the sod,
The heaving earth that may conceal a clod,
Which human love may wish to treasure there.
O Lord ! methinks to give this spot to Thee
Did hardly need an act of consecration :
I deem the pile no wilful novelty,
But a good purpose—old as Thy creation.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

II.

And yet I deem we rightly may rejoice
When the chief shepherd of the many flocks,
That wait the high call of his pastoral voice
On many lawns or yellow pastures choice,
Or crop the turf beneath the sheltering rocks,—
Comes to unite this lone and sever'd fold,
That feed so gently on their native flowers,
With the best sheep that bled in days of old.
Oh! should we not be thankful to behold
One shepherd chief in such a fold as ours?
How may the Sabbath utterance of the dell,
With all the churches, make a mighty *one*,
And with the minster organ's gorgeous swell
The simple psalm combine in unison.

THE DESERTED CHURCH.

After long travail on my pilgrimage,
I sat me down beside an aged heap,
For so it seem'd, with one square shatter'd keep,
Pensively frowning on the wrecks of age.
The river there, as at its latest stage,
Sinks in the verdure of its Sunday sleep,
And sings an under-song for them that weep
O'er the sad blots in life's too open page.
I look'd within, but all within was cold!
The walls were mapp'd with isles of dusky damp,
The long stalls look'd irreverently old,
The rush-strewn aisle was like a wither'd swamp,
And mark'd with loitering foot's unholy tramp;
The chancel floor lay thick with sluggish mould.
Hark! do you hear the dull unfrequent knell,
Survivor sad of many a merry peal,
Whose Sabbath music wont to make us feel
Our spirits mounting with its joyous swell,
That scaled the height, that sunk into the dell?

Now lonely, lowly swinging to and fro,
It warns a scatter'd flock e'en yet to go,
And take a sip of the deserted well.
And, dost thou hear?—then, hearing, long endure.
The Gospel sounds not now so loud and bold
As once it did. Some lie in sleep secure,
And many faint because their love is cold;
But never doubt that God may still be found,
Long as one bell sends forth a Gospel sound!

THE WORD OF GOD.

In holy books we read how God hath spoken
To holy men in many different ways;
But hath the present work'd no sign or token?
Is God quite silent in these latter days?

And hath our heavenly Sire departed quite,
And left His poor babes in this world alone,
And only left for blind belief—not sight—
Some quaint old riddles in a tongue unknown?

Oh! think it not, sweet maid! God comes to us
With every day, with every star that rises;
In every moment dwells the Righteous,
And starts upon the soul in sweet surprises.

The word were but a blank, a hollow sound,
If He that spake it were not speaking still,—
If all the light and all the shade around
Were aught but issues of Almighty will.

Sweet girl, believe that every bird that sings,
And every flower that stars the elastic sod,
And every thought the happy summer brings
To thy pure spirit, is a word of God.

A GRACE.

SWEETEST Lord! that wert so blest
On thy sweetest mother's breast,
Give to every new-born baby
Food that needs—as good as may be.
Jesus! Lord, who long obey'd
The sainted sire, the Mother Maid,
Teach my young heart to submit,—
Deign thyself to govern it.
Babe, and boy, and youth, and man,
All make up the mighty plan;
And these the Saviour sanctified,
For He was all—and then He died.
Whate'er He gives us we may take,
But still receive it for His sake.

But might the prayer within my breast
Make others blest, as I am blest;
And might my joy in thanking Thee
Make for all hungry souls a plea;
Then would I praise and Thee adore,
And ever thank Thee, more and more
Rejoicing, if Thou would'st but bless
Thy creatures for my thankfulness.

"MULTUM DILEXIT."

SHE sat and wept beside His feet; the weight
Of sin oppress'd her heart; for all the blame,
And the poor malice of the worldly shame,
To her was past, extinct, and out of date,
Only the *sin* remain'd,—the leprous state;
She would be melted by the heat of love,
By fires far fiercer than are blown to prove
And purge the silver ore adulterate.
She sat and wept, and with her untress'd hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blest to touch;
And He wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.
I am a sinner, full of doubts and fears,
Make me a humble thing of love and tears.

1848.

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